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THE AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

A Study in the Basis of Religious Authority

BY

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VIVENTIUM OCULIS, NON CORDIBUS,

MORTE SUBTRACTUS.

The following pages contain, with considerable addition and expansion, five lectures delivered under the Alexander Robertson Trust at the University of Glasgow, in February 1929. I would like to express my deep appreciation of the honour done me by the Trustees of the Lectureship, and my warm thanks to the Principal, and the members of the Theological Faculty of the University for kindness shown me during the delivery of the lectures.

My unacknowledged indebtedness to several writers will be easily recognised—perhaps most easily in the section entitled, "The Contribution of Science."

R. H. Strachan.

Edinburgh, 1929.

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PART I

THE AUTHORITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

I. "Authority" and "Experience"
II. The Area of Religious Experience
III. The "Subjectivity" of Religious Experience
IV. Values
V. The Inherent Certitude of Faith
VI. The Question of Evil

CHAPTER I

"AUTHORITY" AND "EXPERIENCE"

"RELIGIOUS Experience" is a term that may be used somewhat carelessly and ambiguously. Historically, the term has become prominent since the days of Schleiermacher, in contrast with and in opposition to types of religion based either upon the external authority of Church or Bible, or upon the conclusions of logical argument. The religion of authority and the religion of the Spirit, however, may easily become a misleading antithesis; experience and authority are not in themselves contradictory terms. We may define religious experience as God-consciousness, an awareness of a personal relationship with a living superhuman power; the quality of religious experience clearly depends on the nature of this superhuman power. For our present purpose, we assume that Christian experience of God, as a relationship of personal communion, is the highest variety of religious experience we know. This assumption does not prevent our determining the value of any religious experience whose content is a relationship with the unseen, indistinguishable even from animism or pantheism. On the contrary; we are on sure scientific ground when we are guided by the principle that the higher cannot be interpreted in terms of the lower. To interpret higher forms of religious experience in terms of the lower, is to imply that all the essential elements of religion are present from the first and that the process of development is merely a vitalising and expanding process; modern evolutionary theory maintains the position that a thing is best known in its perfected and

developed form. The experience of communion with God through Jesus Christ, I shall accept as the highest and final form of religious experience. The consciousness of Jesus Christ in its aspect of the perfect religious experience communicable to men, carries authority in proportion to the place we are inwardly compelled to give to Jesus Christ himself.

A genuine religious experience is not inconsistent with a type of religion where the external authority of Church or Bible is the ultimate ground of certainty. No one doubts for a moment that a devout Catholic does not derive his religious satisfaction and inspiration merely by taking on trust the doctrines and practices which he receives on the bare authority of the Church. His sense of immediate touch with God is not simply a sense of merit in the eyes of God, because he holds correct opinions about His nature and purpose ; neither is his morality pure legalism, because he solves all questions of conscience ultimately by submission to the ethical interpretations and demands of the Church. Augustine combined an absolute faith in the authority of the Church with an amazingly passionate insistence on personal experience.[1] He who taught, *Auctoritas praecedit rationem*, also wrote, *Tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est. Intravi in intima mea duce te*, he says elsewhere : " I entered into the inner chamber of my soul, guided by Thee." [2] His words, " I would not believe the gospel, if the authority of the Catholic Church did not constrain me," [3] properly understood, make a universal appeal.

The real question at issue is whether the intrinsic value of religious experience does not suffer serious loss, when its autonomy and freedom are curtailed by submission to an external authority whose own

[1] *Confessions*, Ed. Gibb and Montgomery; Book X, xx-xxvi; pp. xxxvi ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, Book VII, x. [3] *Contra Ep. Manich*, 6.

credentials are regarded as beyond criticism. Such a submission assumes that God is unwilling to entrust the knowledge of Himself, which He seeks to impart to men, directly to the individual experience; matters of religion are regarded as too important for knowledge, and are made objects of a certitude which demands material guarantees for belief and is imposed, rather than imposes itself, on the human spirit. Such a position inevitably reflects the character of God as conceived in the minds of those who hold it, and the kind of communion which He permits.

In all religions of authority, the experience ultimately rests on something outside itself, which is no part of but is related to it only as a column sticks to its base by the force of gravity. These may admit that private judgment means the right to select our authorities; but the exercise of the power to dissent from or to criticise the authority is not regarded as itself a mark of competence to select the right authority. All religions of authority recognise the right of private judgment and provide arguments in favour of the doctrines they teach; they become inconsistent when they condemn or distrust private judgment in so far as it may proceed to scrutinize these arguments.[1] The real danger for private judgment in religion does not lie in its selection of the proper authority, but in the tendency to take its authorities whole. It is no inevitable corollary of the full doctrine of private judgment, as we shall see, that it rejects all objective authority whatever, or can afford to dispense with the ladders on which it mounts to God. Life in general would be impossible on such terms. On the other hand, the claim of private judgment does assume that there are no infallible authorities, not even when the authority is the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. Infallibility, were it possible, would itself rest upon private judgment. Infallibility is simply a category

[1] Cf. C. J. Cadoux, *Catholicism and Christianity*, p. 162.

which men cannot use; we are entirely without the data in experience from which such a notion can be constructed.

The main thesis of this book is that the seeds of authority and certitude are planted already in the individual experience itself, and that in such soil alone a religious authority which is really authoritative can grow. Whatever additional content religious experience may have, the exercise of private judgment is certainly an indispensable condition of its vitality. Knowledge of the unseen and supernatural world must not be regarded as far too important to be left to the free apprehension of erring and fallible creatures such as men are. A religion of authority assumes that God must reveal Himself to us in a way which admits of no possible mistake; that an omnipotent God would never leave His own creatures to approach Him without hedging them in, so that they never, except by wilful blindness, could miss Him.[1] The traditional conception of religious authority is really governed by a mode of thinking which looks upon God after the fashion of the image in the slave's mind, when he thinks of what he would do were he master. Such slave mentality is at the source of religious infallibilities: the infallible Book, or the infallible Church; even an infallible Christ, in the sense that his words admit of no misunderstanding or mistake on our part; whose truth is guaranteed by miracle or by an infallible Revelation, in order to supplement the discoveries of the natural mind.

The really serious danger in such a religion of authority rests in the conception of God which governs it. A religion of the Spirit is quite as open to the danger of hypocrisy and formalism as a religion of authority; a religion of authority cannot be condemned exclusively on such grounds. Its condemnation rests on the idea of God, and of God's relationship to the whole of human nature, which it fosters. The Spirit of God moulds

[1] Cf. J. Oman, *Grace and Personality*. (Third Edition) Chap. 1.

and illumines all our thinking, but never suppresses it. The Bible contains the only record we have of the continuous development of any religion. For that reason alone it is supremely and uniquely valuable as the definitive illustration in history of the Divine method with men. The chief characteristic of the Divine method with Israel was the recognition of the autonomy of her experience of God; she was allowed liberty to walk after other gods, all of them made in her own image or in the image of pagan deities. In sundry ways and in divers manners, notably by ways of prophetic instruction, suffering, and moral discipline, the guiding Spirit led the chosen remnant, the Church of God, into the truth of God's nature, and at last to recognise God in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Israel reached the summit of her religious experience through the unique and solitary experience of the prophets. The development of legalism and of the institutional in the history of Israel, largely as these latterly bulked in her religious consciousness, broke down; and did not prove to be the main line of Divine revelation. The Jesus of the Gospels acknowledged these developments much more than is usually understood, but transformed them by his central emphasis on the family relationship with God. The consciousness of Jesus Christ carries the prophetic doctrine of God to its fullest expression.

The view of religious authority which appears in the whole attitude of Jesus toward men must dominate all our thinking on the subject. We are concerned with Christian religious experience, as the most fully developed type. The people acknowledged the authority of Jesus Christ because, unlike the Scribes, he did not quote authorities. Men's own consciences, lifted up into the eternal light he shed on all questions that were brought to him, were themselves aroused to give the right answer. Such a question as "Who is my neighbour?"—an excellent example of the questions

decided by rabbinical authorities—is answered in the end by the questioner himself. The lawyer is made to feel a categorical imperative which left only too ample room for private judgment; Jesus sent him away not with one problem solved, but with a complete new set of problems on his hands. To leave problems on men's hands concerning the deepest questions of life is uncongenial to the religion of authority. Jesus claimed no other authority for his words and actions than his own knowledge of God communicable to men, and his own power to communicate it. His parables generally, like the parable of the Good Samaritan, are intended to provoke independent thought and free intuitive assent to his teaching. "Why judge ye not of yourselves what is right?" is a question characteristic of one who recognises the ineffectiveness of mere external authority. On the other hand, we must not lose sight of the fact that Jesus Christ shows no exuberant trust in the human right of private judgment. He never thinks of men and women as those who are able, if they will, to find their own way to God and to determine their own path in life. He speaks too often of the "lost" for that to be true. He comes nearest to stating an unquestionable doctrine in the words: "When ye pray, say 'our Father.'" He always emphasises the elements of discipleship, obedience, and humility. Easily misled in these democratic days by the half-truth that the sanction of political authority rests upon the will of the individual citizen, we must realise anew that our Lord did use the word "kingdom." The theme of his teaching is the Kingdom or Reign of God in the hearts of men and in the world. It is a Kingdom that comes in power. He invites, in a remarkable way, absolute loyalty to his own person.[1] The shepherd imagery in his teaching, the picture of the little child set in the midst—quite a different

[1] Cf. pp. 201 f., *infra*.

picture from Paul's childish child, the "babe in Christ"—both suggest the need of very deep dependence on a leadership and authority which we ourselves did not set up, could not if we would, and did nothing to establish. To him, the multitude were as sheep without a shepherd, as children without a father. In the will of God is our peace.

The authority of which we are in quest clearly must be an authority which does not destroy our personal freedom. It must compel a humble acceptance of the will of God, and also clearly recognise the autonomy of the individual personality and our responsibility for our own beliefs. Experience of God, in the Christian sense, is both the apprehension of God and the certainty that we are apprehended of God. The authority of this experience is our certainty of the character of God, His nature and purpose. Neither ecclesiastical dogma guaranteed by the authority of Church or Bible, nor the position that religious belief can be induced by "reasoning" or logical demonstration, will bring us the certainty we require. "Man," says Mr Middleton Murry, "cannot accept certainties; he must discover them. An accepted certainty is not a certainty, a discovered certainty is. . . . No matter how beautifully, how profoundly, how finally Christ formulated the everlasting truths of religion, in order to know that they are everlasting, in order to know simply what they mean, man must rediscover them in himself."[1] Religious authority is judged by the measure in which it actually accomplishes what it sets out to do. It must satisfy certain tests, and these tests may briefly be summarised.

Convincing religious authority must speak out of the experience of our actual human life and conditions; this truth is symbolised and guaranteed by the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. It must also be an authority which invites investigation and collaboration;

[1] *The Necessity of Art*, p. 161.

its great word "Come and see," expresses Jesus' consistent method with his disciples; "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It must also be an authority which ministers to further progress and encourages the exploring of the ways of God with men; it leads us out into no vain quest; its spirit is the Spirit that "leads into all the truth." Finally, it is an authority that uses personal experience, or the process of rediscovering the truth about God in ourselves, as its organ and instrument. "There is one striking difference," says Dr T. R. Glover, "between Christianity and the other religions, in that the others start with the idea that God is known. Christians do not so start. We are still exploring God on the lines of Jesus Christ—rethinking God all the time, finding Him out. That is what Jesus meant us to do."[1]

No doubt, God does use external compulsion with men. Men are held in with bit and bridle like horse and mule, but only that a free response over the whole area of their being may be awakened. The divine authority can only be recognised as it is meant to be recognised, by a free act of the individual soul to which the whole personality contributes. Man differs from a plant or an animal by much more than the fact that he is conscious of the laws he obeys and of the environment that surrounds him. "I shall pass beyond this faculty[2] of mine also; for this also have the horse and the mule; they also perceive through the body."[3] It is to be noted that the process of rediscovering the truth *in* ourselves, is not synonymous with discovering the truth *for* ourselves. An individual regarded as an isolated unit is a completely unreal abstraction.[4] The ultimate authority in religion is God, apprehended personally in our own experience. Effective religion must be "my" religion; but, "my" religion does not mean, as

[1] *The Jesus of History*, p. 72.
[2] *i.e.*, sense-perception.
[3] Augustine, *Confessions*, x. *vii.*
[4] Cf. pp. 38 ff., *infra*.

Luther says somewhere, that "we sit down and enjoy God all by ourselves in a corner." Popular articles and books with such titles as "My Religion," or "What the Bible means to me," are often practically worthless as Christian apologetic, just because they are so purely individualistic. Religious authority, in the Christian sense, is the divine power exerted upon the individual personality in its whole relationship to its environment. That environment, so far as we come in contact with it, is part of our experience, and includes both the society of our fellows and physical nature. Christianity claims that all religious experience begins with a divine initiative or aggression, and that God is the predominant partner in all religious experience. The divine initiative makes itself felt in the totality of our common experience; in an environment that brings into operation our whole consciousness; our feeling, our knowing, our willing. The divine initiative cannot elicit a free response, its authority cannot be authoritative, unless it imposes itself on our whole personality. Our religious thinking and behaviour are both influenced by, and exert an influence upon, our environment.

Man can both understand the laws of his environment and accept them willingly. He can also mould his own environment. God's statutes may become our songs. The authority of God is no authority for the religious experience unless, as Sabatier says, "it holds in subjection the spirit of the man who hears and understands it; it is the truth which holds sway over the reason, the commandment which rules the will, the inspiration which exalts and enraptures the soul."[1] "The ideal organ of authority" is found in the experiencing soul of man, "in that secret place of its life where the voice of God is heard."[2] To-day, one of the accepted signs of man's spiritual progress is that a greater responsibility is laid upon the individual for

[1] *The Religions of Authority*, p. 257.
[2] J. H. Leckie, *Authority in Religion*, p. 81.

his own beliefs,[1] and that only by our own insight, choice, and deliberate purpose, answering, the direct witness of truth in our own souls, can ultimate certainty in religion be achieved. Only by the same insight, choice, and deliberate purpose can that certainty be maintained.

[1] Cf. J. Oman, *Grace and Personality*, p. 8. Third Edition.

CHAPTER II

THE AREA OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

"FAITH," says Coleridge in the opening sentence of his famous Essay, is "fidelity to our whole being." Faith is the true name for this free response in religious experience to the direct contact of the human life with God and the unseen world. This contact is an experience whose content is a relationship with God and the Unseen, which, in essence and in the first instance is a practical relationship of self-dedication, as well as a mystical feeling; mystical experience is a fruit rather than a source of this practical relationship. This direct practical experience and conception of God appears in its noblest form where God and the unseen world are interpreted in terms derived from our knowledge of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. It is no mere begging of the question that we thus begin, in our analysis of religious experience, with the Christian experience of God; the Christian experience of God alone enables us to value other forms of religious experience where the awareness of God may be either dim or absent. The higher, as we have seen, must be used to interpret the lower. Precisely because God can thus be conceived as the Father of all men, is it possible to believe that men may be in direct touch with God, and yet be unaware of the full meaning of their experience. Our chief interest in these pages is in Christian religious experience. We are only enriching and deepening our experience of God in Christ if we recognise that the appeal of beauty, the compulsion of truth on our minds (especially as seen in the sustained

yet passionate emotion of scientific research), the zeal for social justice, are also forms of religious experience; in all these the initial impulse comes from God; in each of these kinds of experience, the spiritual world of truth, beauty and goodness is manifestly breaking through in man's experience of his environment. The conscious realisation of God in full Christian experience neither dims the vision of beauty, nor renders less fearless the passion for truth; nor, as is sometimes slanderously said, does it dull or dope both the zeal and the demand for social justice into quiescence. The breath of the "pale Galilean" has not made the world "grey." Our Christian conception of God demands that His nature is such that He will answer men before they call, and gird men for His service though they know Him not. "He first loved us."

The appeal of the Christian message to-day, as always, depends on the sure expectation that it must actually encounter an unrecognised presence of God in the experience of men, which enables it to create in the heart the full experience of God from which the message itself derives. No useful distinction can properly be drawn between "religious experience" and "religious consciousness," such as is drawn by Dr Thouless.[1] Religious experience is an emotional undercurrent which not only accompanies religious behaviour or religious thought, as in acts of worship or meditation: it accompanies our ordinary life, if it is sincerely lived, wherein God may be present though unidentified.

The full Christian position involves that the experience of God, in the consciousness of Jesus Christ, is the most complete of which humanity is capable; the Christian definition of God is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Unfortunately it has become very difficult for many in our own day, owing to the theological structures that have been reared on the

[1] *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 5.

original foundation of the experience of God through Jesus Christ, to recognise that before the Church entered upon the interpretation of the experience of the Resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, there must have been a self-authenticating power in the impact of Jesus upon the minds of his followers which compelled both assent and obedience. If that self-authenticating power has now died out, or is confined in its operation to those who hold orthodox views of the person of Christ, no attempt to revive it is possible through attempted logical proof of the historicity of his miracles, or of the Resurrection, or of the authenticity of the original documents. It is also useless, for the purpose of awakening direct religious experience of God, to construct theories of the Person of Christ; these theories are a consequence of what men have seen and experienced of God in Jesus Christ[1] and cannot be a source of this experience itself. Beauty existed before art-criticism, and sound before the science of acoustics. Theology is a result and not a source of religious experience. This self-authenticating power in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ existed before any theories of his person arose, or any documents were written preserving his memory. Moreover, his self-authenticating, self-compelling power must have made its appeal to some kindred receptive factor in the experience of men. Men did not merely reproduce and repeat his influence on their lives; they replied to it as out of a perception of God, already existing but inarticulate. God was already apprehended in the experience of the Jewish people before Christ appeared; and it was not long before it was recognised by Christian thinkers, like Paul and "John," that God was already known, however dimly, in all religions. There was a "light, that lighteneth every man," an inner light

[1] For a fuller exposition of what is meant by the experience of God through Jesus Christ, see the closing chapters on the Authority of Jesus.

shining in darkness. Has this universal light ceased to shine ? Is there anything in men's common experience of life which may be regarded as the unrecognised but authentic touch of God on the soul of man ? Is there any direct witness of God in the experience of men to-day on which the Christian message can still lay hold ? Where are we to look for such a witness ? What kind of witness will it be ? How shall we recognise its authority when it appears ? What kind of authority will this witness display ?

There are very many to-day in whose lives God is no longer an experienced reality. One reason at least is often not far to seek. They have been taught, or the idea has soaked into their minds that only in certain places, in certain situations, or in certain mental conditions is God to be experienced. They have rightly discarded the notion of accepting their religious beliefs on an external authority, such as they have been encouraged to believe are the Church or the Bible. Yet all the time and all unconsciously in their search for God, after the very fashion of authority religions, they are dogmatically imposing their own ideas as to the ways in which God must make Himself known in His own world directly to the human spirit, if experience of Him is to be genuine. D. G. Rossetti, in a poem entitled *World's Worth*,[1] gives a picture of a certain Father Hilary who could not find the experience of God he needed in the Service of the Mass. He climbed the stairs that led out to a balcony on the roof of his church :

> his eye
> Passed all the roofs to the stark sky,
> Swept with no wing, with wind alone.

[1] For this reference, I am indebted to *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, by H. Wheeler Robinson, p. 286.

The sound of the Service beneath him died away. Silence came :

> and all was awe,—the breath
> Of God in man that warranteth
> The inmost utmost things of faith.
> He said : " O God, my world in Thee."

In the wind-swept sky he found the sense of God which he sought. I am far from suggesting that every man, like Father Hilary, would always find in the touch of nature what he found ; but the conception of the poem is true. We must exclude neither beauty nor truth, as direct means of access for God to the soul of man. " Poetry," said Shelley, " redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man."[1]

> Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
> Gold-like and warm ; it's the prime of May.
> Better than mortar, brick and putty,
> Is God's house on a blowing day.
> Lean me more up the mound ; now I feel it :
> All the old heath smells ! Ain't it strange ?
> There's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,
> But He's by us, juggling the change.[2]

The sacraments of God are neither only two nor seven, but manifold as life itself. Not all these sacraments are of equal value. The life, death, and teaching of Jesus are together the perfect sacrament. To seek God everywhere is to find Him, as our souls desire Him, nowhere. Electricity is everywhere, but we find it really, in its impact on our lives, in certain points of light and heat and power.

The ultimate authority in religion is God, and we are often guilty of a kind of intellectual pride, when we ourselves dictate the occasion or prejudge the nature of that direct experience of God which we long for. " We can go astray by dwelling exclusively on what is called

[1] *Essay in Defence of Poetry.*
[2] George Meredith, *Juggling Jerry*, xii.

intellectual honesty. There are other forms of honesty as well, such as taking our experience as it comes to us in a simple and unsophisticated way. "Religion begins, not in proving God, but in identifying Him."[1] We approach the question of religious experience with ready-made, *a priori* conceptions in our minds of the kind of experience that God must give; we will not examine the facts, and learn by experience the manner in which the divine coercion is actually exercised upon us; we arrogate to ourselves an infallible power of judging, which shall enable us to determine how God will appear to us, and how God will actually communicate directly with the human mind. Such a type of thought often parades as intellectual honesty; but there is such a thing as honest dealing both with our æsthetic judgments and our whole felt attitude towards things unseen. There is a type of sceptical individualism which is strangely akin to the type of mind that welcomes external authorities and infallibilities, inasmuch as it presupposes an infallibility of private judgment as to what constitutes the possible area of direct experience of God and what does not. To an unprejudiced mind, that area should be as wide as life itself. The right of private judgment as the supposed charter of "free-thinking" may itself be judgment with its eyes in blinkers of prejudice, worn by scepticism and by orthodoxy alike. "A church," says Mr Bernard Shaw, "which has no place for free-thinkers: nay, which does not inculcate and encourage free-thinking with a complete belief that thought, when really free, must by its own law take the path to the Church's bosom, not only has no future in modern culture, but obviously has no faith in the valid science of its own tenets."[2]

We are certainly indebted to great prophetic personalities both for revelation and for guidance in

[1] H. H. Farmer, *Experience of God*, p. 30.
[2] Preface to *St Joan*, p. 40.

our search for God. We cannot insist that every man must find God for himself. Dependence on such authorities is not the same thing as dependence on an external authority which imposes material guarantees for spiritual facts. The essence of prophetic experience is that it is communicable. Professor J. S. Haldane has quite recently described as " religious materialism " and a symptom of the loss of vision of the omnipresence of spiritual reality, the notion that the revelation of God comes to us through " inspired or divine messengers and messages." [1] He appears to regard such revelation as indirect, and not direct revelation ; as accepted on external authority. Dr Haldane is clearly confusing the fact of inspiration with traditional theories of its operation, of which some may indeed fairly be described as materialistic in their conception. This confusion vitiates much of his interpretation of religion. Are there no inspired personalities and epoch-making heralds of truth in the story of Science ? Dependence on prophetic personalities in religion does not invalidate the faith that God reveals Himself directly to every man and in every man.

One writer in the New Testament, who is pre-eminent as a prophet of the " knowledge " or experience of God, gives a definition of God whose sheer simplicity may hide from us its profundity—" God is love." By his frequent references to human love, he makes it plain that all sacrificial love among men, wherever it occurs, is actually experience of God. " We know that we have passed from death into life (*i.e.*, communion with God), if we love the brotherhood." [2] There is a divine quality in the action of all those who give their lives, or spend themselves for the sake of their brethren. Mr H. H. Farmer, in the book already mentioned, makes arresting use of the story of Captain Oates, who, on the ill-fated South Polar

[1] *The Sciences and Philosophy*, p. 281.

[2] 1 John iii. 14; cf. 16, 17.

expedition, walked out into the blizzard and disappeared, in order to save his companions from carrying his helpless, frost-bitten body over the Antarctic wastes. No one will deny the "tremendous" divine quality of his action, which makes its superhuman appeal to every sincere mind; but I am inclined to think that by the use of the word "sacred" (much abused in theories of religion dominated by Otto's theories) as applied particularly to the action of Captain Oates, Mr Farmer tends unduly to limit the content and area of the divine or "sacred" experience in human life. Later he says that "the mother casting her babe to Moloch, and Damien giving up all to tend the lepers, stand in a direct line of succession with one another. . . . Both are bowing their heads . . . to a haunting divine presence in their hearts." The first instance has no "sacredness" in it, except in the tenuous, non-ethical sense of the word which Otto has rendered fashionable to-day. The surrender of the babe to Moloch, and Damien's or Oates's surrender of their lives, not only differ *toto cælo* in ethical quality, but also in this—that Damien's and Oates's actions were free surrenders to the imperative of the Unseen, made with an instinctive, if unuttered faith that there exists an unseen spiritual environment, where what they have done has eternal value. We are not likely to identify the presence of God in our present-day life by making use of a conception of the "sacred" or the "holy," which can only be understood by reference to the religious experience of primitive man.[1]

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," is a sentence which occurs in a very august context, and expresses a truly divine analogy with the love of God in the Cross of Christ; but there are also less impressive and more commonplace instances where human life and conduct appear as a very sacrament of the love of God. I

[1] Cf. pp. 58 ff. *infra*.

remember once visiting a humble room in the East End of Glasgow, where a woman sat tending a child in a cradle. The child was not her own but a neighbour's, which she had offered to tend during the day. A victim of the alcoholic habit, she had deliberately used her love for children to keep herself indoors, out of the way of temptation till the drink-shops were closed. There was a divine quality in that recognition of the "expulsive power" of *human* affection.[1]

The area of human experience within which we may have a vision of God is much wider than orthodox religion has allowed. We cannot deny that there is a divine quality in that disinterested search for truth which is the religion of many a scientist. Shall we not recognise something akin to the Spirit of God and truly sacred in the self-sacrifice, often self-immolation of the scientist, who cares so much for truth that he dedicates himself and his life to the solution it may be of one insignificant mystery? There is an element of the sacred and even of the awesome in all self-forgetful devotion to truth for its own sake; our attitude towards such devotion passes beyond moral approbation, and, as Martineau[2] would have said, becomes "reverence." We bow our spirits to it as we bow them to the action of Captain Oates, or Jean Valjean; we are in the presence of a "religious" fact. The day has gone by when, like Nietzsche, we are asked to regard the man of science as "merely an instrument the most costly, the most exquisite, the most easily

[1] "In the very constitution of the human soul there is provision for an immediate apprehension of God. But often in the transient lights and shades of conscience we pass on and 'know not who it is'; and not till we see in another the victory that shames our own defeat, and are caught up by an enthusiasm for some realised heroism or sanctity, do the authority of right and the beauty of holiness come home to us as an appeal literally Divine." (Martineau, *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 652.)

[2] Cf. *Types of Ethical Theory*, II. pp. 233 ff. Second Edition.

tarnished of instruments. He is incapable of love; he is incapable of hate. His one purpose is to 'reflect' such things as he was tuned to receive."[1] If Truth has objective value and the pursuit of it is carried on regardless of fame or consequences, that pursuit is actuated by a sustained emotion which also possesses a divine quality.

> This man decided not to live but know—
> Bury this man there?
> Here—here's the place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
> Lightnings are loosened,
> Stars come and go!

Is there not also a divine quality in the passion for beauty? Benvenuto Cellini was a most wicked person, and a devout Catholic. He is a striking example of the non-moral type of religious man. Have we therefore reason to think that his recorded prayer to God on the eve of casting his famous "Perseus"[2] was insincere or unheard? There is a puritanical strain in many of us which makes it an act of moral courage to regard Beauty or Truth as the manifestation of God. We often seem to worship a God who is interested only in morals and therefore chiefly in the best people, and is not pained and hindered in His purposes by obscurantism and ugliness. We must never be afraid of losing our sense of God in the sheer enjoyment of God's creation. Art and Science carry great truths about God into the experience of men; not because Art and Science set out to teach these, but because they are themselves alive with a passion for these truths which carries them direct into men's minds. In every compelling vision of Truth, Beauty or Goodness, we hear a voice saying: "Have I been so long time with you and thou hast not known Me?" With Augustine, we

[1] J. W. N. Sullivan, *The Tyranny of Science*, pp. 8 f. Cf. *Aspects of Science* (First Series.); '*The Ideal Scientific Man.*'

[2] J. A. Symonds, *The Renaissance in Italy*, vol. iii. p. 344.

might well exclaim: *Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova!*

A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite tender sky,
The ripe, rich tints of the cornfield,
And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland,
The charm of the golden rod;
Some of us call it Autumn
And others call it God.

A picket frozen on duty,
A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the Rood;
And millions who, humble and nameless,
The straight hard pathway trod—
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it God.

The vision of Goodness, Beauty or Truth, however obtained, is actually the living touch of God upon our spirits. We are not merely taking home to our hearts an idea, but actually surrendering ourselves to an absolute demand which is made upon us. This vision and surrender are of the essence of religious experience.

Yet the full demand upon ourselves, Christian Experience—in other words personal awareness of God—alone can realise. The love of Beauty by itself, so far from bridging the gulf between ourselves and those who are content with ugliness, tends to widen it. Knowledge also divides men into learned and ignorant. Only personal awareness of God, especially in prayer, creates the desire and gives the power to reproduce His goodness in ourselves, and to bring others where we ourselves are. Of those who see God, through Jesus Christ, the demand is made for a love really intense enough to enable us to love our neighbours as ourselves.[1]

[1] Cf. W. Temple, *Christus Veritas*, pp. 41 ff.

CHAPTER III

THE "SUBJECTIVITY" OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

THE obvious reply to this insistence upon religious experience not only as the ideal organ of the Divine authority but as itself that authority, is that it ultimately lands us in subjectivism and individualism; leaves us naked to all the forces of doubt and negation; destroys what has been an indispensable element in Christianity from the first, the corporate life and testimony of the Church. These charges may best be met by an attempt at a constructive presentation and analysis of the nature and content of individual experience.

1. *The "Illusion" Theory of Religion*

The first thing to be said about religious experience is that it is a psychological fact. Its "subjectivity" does not belie its factual nature. A brief reference may be permitted to the general theory of the "illusionist" psychology, that the apparent objectivity of religious experience is due to our projecting on our environment our own wishes and desires; or that our conception of God is simply the accompaniment or shadow of some "father" or "mother" *imago* in our own minds, derived from childhood's experience. This act of projection is described as the attempt of the mind to escape from the discomfort of its own weakness, from inner conflict, or from a sense of disharmony in the outer world. "In projection, as in repression, the mind refuses to acknowledge part of its own contents;

but instead of refusing attention to the existence of the content in question, it recognises the existence, while denying the ownership."[1] There must also be taken into account the mental process known as "rationalisation," in which the mind produces a reason, other than the true cause or motive, for an act or intention. In illustration, there can be brought such well-known instances as the miser who is in the habit of excusing his meanness and parsimony, by saying (and believing) that he is saving for wife or children; or the bad workman who finds fault with his tools. We may thus create and *do* homage to a higher moral reality, by believing what we wish to believe. All these mental processes which I have mentioned are really there, and it may at once be conceded that these varied aspects of mental projection are capable of influencing us in our interpretation of reality.

There are various forms which the illusionist psychology takes, and varying degrees in which it is applied. Mr Julian Huxley,[2] up to a certain point, refuses to admit the theory of illusion as an argument for the unreality of religious experience, but in the end regards the idea of the *personality* of God as due to the pressure of a kind of biological necessity. "By organising our knowledge of outer reality after the pattern of a personality, we make it possible for it to interpenetrate our private personality."[3] Mr A. G. Tansley seems to mean much the same thing when he says "it cannot be doubted that God has been a necessity to the human race, that He is still a necessity, and will long continue to be."[4] In Comtian language, a personal God is a Regent during the long minority of humanity.

The illusionist psychology, however, has been effectively answered in so far as it bears on religious

[1] A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology*, p. 155.
[2] *Essays of a Biologist*, pp. 283 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 215 ff.
[4] *The New Psychology*, p. 161.

experience.[1] I do not propose here to repeat the answers that have been given. Generally it may be said that the theory of illusion, carried to its logical conclusion, would render all knowledge untrustworthy, inasmuch as all knowledge is mental process. The illusionist position also confuses the scientific abstraction called the "machinery," or "mechanism" of the mind with the mind itself. This confusion is an example of the general ambiguity produced, when we identify the story of the origins of things with the things themselves.[2] On the other hand, the illusionist psychology has rendered a much needed service to the psychology of religious experience, which ought to be recognised.

The Projection theory is really an aid to the defence of religious truth. The position that religious experience brings with it its own self-authenticating authority, does not require us to deny *in toto* the position that our conception of God is a projection of our own minds. To deny this altogether would be to invalidate our whole knowledge of reality, which is a mental construction. Reality is not real, simply as something wholly outside us which hits us, as it were, in the face—a *Ding an Sich ;* if it were, we could not know it at all, as Hume and Berkeley pointed out. On the other hand, to deny the ultimate validity of our knowledge of God on the ground that it is given us in our own subjective experience, is like suggesting that the other half of an apple may be a pear, or that an egg, being

[1] R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, pp. 25 ff. F. Von Hügel, *Essays*, I, pp. 42 ff. H. Balmforth, *Is Christian Experience an Illusion?* W. R. Matthews, *The Gospel and the Modern Mind*, Chap. V. C. H. Valentine, *Modern Psychology and the Validity of Christian Experience*, pp. 3-32.

[2] "This intrusion of the question of origins upon the living experience-knowledge of the soul, is the biggest red-herring in the world. It has been trailed across the path of religious knowledge, and has led vast multitudes off the scent in their pursuit of truth." (J. Kelman, *Foundations of Faith*, p. 155.)

a taste, does not exist. All religious revelation, if it is to be knowledge or experience, must come subjectively. The illusionist psychology has done religion a service, inasmuch as it has emphasised the God within us, as against the "God beyond" of mysticism or of the religion of external authority. It makes, indeed, an unwarrantable intrusion into the sphere of metaphysics when it logically asserts that if you could abolish all the people who believe in a personal God, you would abolish God. The illusionist would, I imagine, object to the charge of "abolishing" God, if he is interpreted as meaning that without the idea of God the human race would have advanced further. He may see quite clearly that the idea of God is not only a biological necessity, but also a form of Truth. He does, however, bring the charge of anthropomorphism against religion. In so reiterating an old accusation, he has done religion a service. We need not be afraid of anthropomorphism, which is inevitable. Jesus Christ encouraged "anthropomorphism," when he encouraged men to reason from their own experience of fatherhood to the Fatherhood of God. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your heavenly Father?" It is anthropomorphism when the Johannine Christ says: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

One very important effect of the attack of the illusionist psychology is that it forces us to examine the use we make of our own minds. Projection in religious, as in scientific experience is a fact; but it may be an instrument of truth as well as of falsehood. When it is said that to ascribe the human qualities of reason and love to God is anthropomorphism, it is quite an effective retort to make that "if Theism is anthropomorphism, materialism is mechanomorphism, an attempt to fashion the infinite in the image of a machine."[1] We are ultimately responsible for the use

[1] B. H. Streeter, *Reality*, p. 9.

we make of our anthropomorphic capacity. My knowledge of what is going on in my neighbour's mind is ultimately a projection of my own mind into his. I may attribute to him wrong motives, which are really a reflection of my own evil motives—motives, it may be suspected, such as would direct my action were I in my neighbour's situation. I may be right or I may be wrong, but at least it is my moral duty to examine well my "projection." Nothing is more common than that people should denounce the same fault in others as they themselves possess and of which they are secretly ashamed. One important part of the discipline of religious experience must be to examine ourselves. An examination which excludes the scrutiny of our thoughts of God may be part of our sin against Him. Theology itself, as in forensic doctrines of the Atonement, has sometimes given objective validity to a notion of God, which is really derived from the legal basis of human society. We are also familiar with Matthew Arnold's description of those who think of God as "a man in the next street." Anthropomorphism is part of the "machinery" of the human mind, and, like all machinery, needs repairs. The illusionist psychology is really in line with the trend of modern scientific thought, which gives life and mind a dominant place in the interpretation of reality. Life and mind are the ultimate facts in the universe. It is part of our God-given freedom that we are permitted to "make God in our own image." Words once uttered by a cynic have come to express a profound truth.

2. *The Social Constituents in Religious Experience*

The individual personality which experiences, does not stand alone in a world unknown and unrelated to himself. To enthrone the authority of individual experience is not the same thing as to insist that the individual is the authority. Matthew Arnold has a

passage in *Culture and Anarchy*,[1] in which he speaks of Mr Roebuck's stock argument for proving the greatness and happiness of England: "May not every man in England say what he likes?" Freedom in religion is sometimes understood in Mr Roebuck's way. We must remember that no individual experience is a purely individual phenomenon; a very large part of our experience—religious and otherwise—is not self-acquired; it is the experience of those who lived before us as well as of those with whom we live and work, built up into the structure of our own being. To a great deal of the rejection of religious tradition and doctrine to-day it is relevant to reply: "Art thou the first man that was born?"[2] There are no self-made men, and there are no men whose making began at the moment of their conception. Joseph Parker once said to an individual who boasted that he was a "self-made man,": "Sir, you have relieved the Lord of a great responsibility." Centuries have been needed to make the world where we live; centuries have gone to make minds that only begin to understand it. Both the intellectual and spiritual experience of men have no natural growth and destiny of their own which can be so isolated as to be wholly regarded apart from the pressure of social influences and movements. In these social factors tradition and heredity are active. Both outer and inner factors are necessary for the totality of individual experience. Our environment, both social and physical, is part of our personality. Experience derives what it works upon and the tools with which it works from what meets it from without.[3] We both mould and are moulded by our environment; and the experience of a spiritual and unseen environment is not deprived of objective reality when we

[1] For this reference, I am indebted to J. Kelman, *The Foundations of Faith*, p. 152.

[2] Job xv. 7.

[3] Cf. W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Re-making*, p. 149.

regard it as the creation of our highest thoughts and noblest fears. The result is not a chaos of individualism; if they are Theists, men are singularly alike in their highest religious interpretations of reality. "The Father of Spirits will have his image brought forth in every one of his offspring by the thought and conviction of each soul itself."[1] That is Love's way. "For human progress it is necessary," says Von Hügel, "for every soul to be, to become, always to re-become, outward moving, humbly welcoming, generously interpretative. Only then could even an angel from heaven help it at all."[2]

A solitary tree, standing on a wide moor, is not alone; it has roots we cannot see and moisture beneath that feeds it; it breathes both out and in, and is dependent on sun and rain; it is shaped by prevailing winds. All the forces of the universe go to its making and to its continual support. Similarly, no individual human experience is possible without an environment of history, and an environment of present circumstance and social relationship. It may also be added that no human experience is complete, without some sense of responsibility for a world yet to be; faith gives substance to what we hope for, and the greatest human personalities have acquired much of their experience by thinking, labouring, suffering and, when conscience demanded it, dying for things that are not yet. Man can both remember and forecast. Luther before the German diet was not, as Charles described him: "A single monk, led astray by private judgment," who "has set himself against the faith held by all Christians for a thousand years and more"; that very faith itself created Luther and the Reformation. The trust in personal experience as the true organ of authority is neither "subjectivism," nor "individualism." The forms and ideas of our religious faith did not arise out

[1] Howison, *The Limits of Evolution* (quoted Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 319).

[2] *Essays and Addresses*, I, p. 99.

of our own individual experience; whenever we seek to clothe our religious experience in thought and word, or to express it in forms of worship, we cannot help borrowing from the tradition and atmosphere in which we live. Even in religious intuition itself there is also a co-operation of outer and inner factors. Intuition is also a process with a history; even the mystic draws near to God by abstracting from common experience and denying the world, which is itself a process of thought requiring an environment.[1] Intuitions may come to us like bolts from the blue, but they do not arise out of the blue; they are the result of a series of intermediate steps, whose connexion with each other we perceive immediately or directly.[2] A piece of music consists of successive notes and chords, but the experience of succession is lost in the intuition of the whole; yet the experience of succession is necessary to the understanding of the whole. A sentence is a series of words; but the experience of the series is apprehended as an immediate whole. There is a road which intuition has travelled although "it leaves no footmarks."[3]

On the other hand, we must be careful of overestimating the social influence in the formation of religious experience and of underestimating the creative influence of the individual. Religion may be defined generally as the spiritual response of man to his natural environment. His chief religious concern, however, is not with its structure, but with the way in which it environs him. It must be assumed also that religion implies that a God or gods, a Divine Other or others, exist to whom belongs the control of the environment.[4]

[1] W. Morgan, *The Nature and Right of Religion*, p. 20.

[2] C. C. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relation of God and Man*, pp. 76 ff.

[3] Henry Jones, *A Faith that Enquires*, p. 108.

[4] This would not really exclude a religion like Buddhism, which, whatever we may say of its primitive forms, in its developed form at least deifies its founder, and really owes its success to the addition of this and other extraneous religious elements, lacking in Buddha's philosophical system.

The important thing in religion, therefore, is the personal and individual relationship to the Divine.

Apparently the tendency has been to overestimate the social factor even in primitive religion. In primitive religion, the individual is no doubt merged in the tribe; the god is a tribal god with whom the tribe is kin, who has the good of the community at heart, and whose chief interest is to maintain and protect its law and moral order. The value of individual experience, however, may be underestimated even in primitive tribal religion, and needs to be reasserted in view of theories that would resolve the idea of the Divine into a deification of society. Dr Malinowski[1] has pointed out that the ritual connected with death in primitive societies, takes into account both personal sorrow and fear, as well as the sense of tribal loss; "the nearest relatives and friends are disturbed to the depth of their emotional life." The reason why on such an occasion the public observance of religious customs and rites always takes a more authoritative place than the individual experience, is really a tribute to the potentially disruptive power of the individual experience; the individual's instinct on such occasions is towards moods and acts that would, if allowed free course, ultimately destroy the tribal life; he is filled with fear and horror, may abandon the corpse, run away from the village, destroy all the belongings of the dead one. This disruptive tendency is also creative of outward organisation; the public ceremonial rites all signify beliefs that have the effect of restoring the shaken morale and threatened solidarity of the group; they foster belief in the continued existence of the spirit, and inculcate certain commemorative and sacrificial ceremonies. All this is important, especially when we come to consider the value of the institution as an element in religious authority; historically considered, religion has never been a purely private affair.

[1] *Science, Religion and Reality*, pp. 19 ff.

But the individual's experience with its possible effect on communal life has all along determined the shape of the outward organisation. If we insist, as we do, on individual experience as the supreme organ of religious authority, we must always avoid minimising either the individual or the social influences which have gone to the making of all true religious experience, and are necessary in order to maintain and keep it alive.

Individual experience not only receives but gives; it is not merely passive. Wherein does the individuality of religious experience consist? A creative power is exerted by the individual upon the outward material of his experience. The inner factor in religious experience has its analogy in the creative power exercised by the artist, and also by the scientist. Even a scientist's hypothesis is not a mere logical deduction from certain facts; it is not solely to be described as a discovery; it is an effort of the imagination, a work of art, the result of insight and intuition. It has been remarked of Clerk Maxwell's work, that his proofs are sometimes faulty, but his results are sound. "His rational faculty, as evidenced by his mathematical reasoning, was a distinctly more fallible thing than his intuition." This disparity between proofs and results has its significance for religious experience also. Christian people of all Christian denominations and differing ways of inherited worship and of thought, may by different roads reach the same experience. Some deliberately choose to reach, or by the unconscious impact of tradition may actually attain, their experience by a strict adherence to the teaching of the Church, and a strict valuation of its prescribed modes of worship; yet even they contribute much from experience. They may, however, slip into an invincible habit of thinking that, for example, sacramental experience can be conveyed only by certain traditional accredited channels of ritual and a certain kind of ministry. Their "proofs" may be quite faulty though

their " results " in life and experience are sound. This traditionary element in religious experience is not necessarily harmful, if it is used poetically and symbolically ; the sectarian or obscurantist danger appears when we begin to " rationalise," as psychologists say ; to regard the traditionary element as equally authoritative with the experience itself.

Nor is it merely in the use which it makes of traditionary material, that the creative activity of individual experience is subject to the possibility of error. " We mistake men's diseases," said Richard Baxter, " when we think there needeth nothing to cure their errors but only to bring them the evidence of truth. Alas ! there are many distempers of mind to be removed before men are apt to receive that evidence." Not only may knowledge be at fault, but we may be led astray by personal prejudice, or an instinctive animosity towards whatever disturbs our peace of mind ; there may also be a wilful refusal to learn from the experience of others. An element of personal character always interweaves itself with the certainties of religious experience. The seat of religious authority is the human soul under the Divine guidance, and until the soul is completely cleared from sin, we have no right to expect that the Spirit of God shall completely clear our minds from error. No infallibility can be claimed for private judgment. A fallible mind is a greater gift than a puppet mind, mechanically secured and determined against all possibility of making a mistake. Our certainty is that God who gave us fallible minds in order to know Him, can also overrule their mistakes and cleanse us from those moral faults which cloud and distort our knowing.[1]

[1] Cf. C. J. Cadoux, *Catholicism and Christianity*, pp. 168 ff.

CHAPTER IV

VALUES

If reliance upon religious experience is not mere subjectivism, we may now proceed to ask the all-important question: What is the relation of religious experience to Reality?[1]

Religious experience is practically meaningless unless it leads us to the very centre of unseen Reality, is itself akin to Reality, and is marked by the behaviour peculiar to men who know that Reality corresponds to their experience of it. How are we to know that our religious experience is, in Martineau's beautiful words, "no transient brush of a fancied angel's wing, but the abiding presence and persuasion of the Soul of Souls?"

In order to establish the reality of religious experience, much use is made to-day of the conception of "values." What are meant by "values"? A thing may be said to have "value" when we mean that it is valuable to us for certain purposes; it has a certain *utilitarian* value, such as an article of food possesses; apart from our eating our food and enjoying it, food has no "value" in itself. We may, however, also speak of "value" in another sense. A scientific discovery may acquire a utilitarian value, though many scientific discoveries have none; nevertheless they have a value, as representing the truth about the world in which we live; they have a spiritual or ideal value. The pursuit of truth is a value or end in itself. A work of art may have a decorative or luxury value; but its

[1] See the definition of "Reality" in Professor Eddington's, *The Nature of the Physical World* (pp. 282 ff.), and his amusing satire on vague uses of the word.

permanent value is that it is beautiful, and makes real to us beauty that would otherwise be invisible. To be good merely because goodness is "the best policy," is not the highest form of goodness; goodness is an end in itself, and is valued and pursued even although the good man may suffer personal loss. Love at its highest is not dependent on the response it receives; its moral value increases in proportion to its capacity for self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice; in other words, for being an end in itself. The highest "values" of life which we know are thus summarised as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. These are absolute values, and belong to the "kingdom of ends."

Men are, in Professor Sorley's words, "bearers of values,"[1] by which is meant that these values come to birth in the conscious experience of human personalities. That consciousness of value contains nothing that is really home-made within the walls of a purely individual experience. These "values" are born in our experience. They are not mere preferences or desires of our own conceiving; they are the result of our creative reaction and reply to our environment. We are constrained to give more than a merely physical interpretation to environment; man does not live by bread alone; he responds to an unseen spiritual environment. The spiritual values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness arise out of our experience of adaptation to our whole environment. Let it be repeated that we can only know our environment by the way in which it environs us; the way of that environment, in co-operation with the creatures themselves, is to produce human creatures who are "bearers of values." That environment of ours must be a cause adequate to its effect. Only a rational environment can produce the rational, a moral one the moral, a spiritual one the spiritual; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit." We judge

[1] *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, pp. 123 ff.

from what we know in ourselves of the highest values and of their inescapable coercion exercised on ourselves, that the world of things unseen lies not merely somewhere behind the shadows, but is actually known in our experience as a world of absolute compelling values.

It is along the lines of our sense of values that the authority of religious experience as a symptom and element of Reality must be developed. The crucial point in religious experience is the judgment that our " values " are neither mere selfish preferences nor mere individual desires; that Reality as we experience it really cares for them, and has really invited their appearance in us; is not merely sympathetic towards them, but jealously conservative of them. A Reality that cares for, invites, and conserves personal values must itself be capable of being conceived in personal terms. Our experience is not solely dependent on its own courageous assertion for such an estimate of ultimate reality. The personality of Jesus Christ is itself, as the doctrine of the Incarnation teaches, the supremely perfect manifestation of human life, and of a life that is communicable to men; his human life is both the product and the only complete response to human environment; the final religious argument for the nature of God, is God as revealed in the consciousness, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[1] The predisposition to interpret the universe in personal terms, which life sincerely interpreted in terms of the highest values we know produces in us, also makes faith in " the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ " at least the sanest attitude yet conceived towards the universe. Apart, however, from Jesus Christ, it is not merely for theoretical reasons that a world without such a God would be intolerable to us. " It is because we cannot conceive such a world giving birth to beings

[1] Cf. pp. 236 ff., *infra*.

like ourselves with this invincible feeling for values."[1] We do not merely desire a "friendly universe"; our attitude is not that of a suppliant, but of a judge.[2] In the person of Jesus Christ, the highest values we know are incarnate, and it is at least reasonable to believe that these values fully interpret God, the ultimate reality. Jesus has for us the value of God. Christianity does not deify Christ, but christianises the universe.

Religious experience as a symptom and element of reality, essentially depends on the principle of the conservation of values in reality. Conservation, however, is a somewhat inadequate term, if God is ultimate reality. In the nature of such a God as our sense of values demands, there is not only power to conserve, but ethical purpose to increase and propagate values. Religious experience not only demands the conservation of our values, but also a deepening and compelling sense of ethical responsibility on our part for their increase.[3] This sense of absolute moral obligation on our part enters into the experience of value, not only when value is interpreted as goodness, but also when interpreted as truth or beauty. No doubt the scientist would be untrue to his task if he allowed his search for truth to be undertaken in the interests of any theological doctrine whatsoever; yet the rejection of any theological interest is in itself a moral devotion to the pursuit of truth; the desire to know, merely for the sake of knowing, has deep moral value. It is a sustained emotion. It is immaterial that the man of science is not concerned whether his discoveries are a moral benefit to the world or not; he keeps alive the passion for accuracy, clearness of vision, and sincerity in a world where many emotional appeals are rendered barren by ignorant, muddy, and prejudiced thinking; the disinterested pursuit of truth has an antiseptic quality

[1] Cf. W. Morgan, *The Nature and Right of Religion*, p. 75.
[2] Cf. A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 42.
[3] Cf. W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, pp. 158 ff.

which is morally and spiritually valuable. The artist also, must not paint his picture in order directly to convey a moral or spiritual message; his moral and spiritual influence are by-products of his work as an artist. Like the scientist, he cannot avoid conveying to the spectator the values created indirectly by his work; he is indeed morally responsible for his own subject after it leaves his hand, just because the work is his own.[1] Christian conviction condemns any meretricious or self-seeking element in the work of scientist or artist, and invites them so to judge their own work, inasmuch as it holds that God Himself is the Fountain of all wisdom, the Source of all beauty, the final Valuer of all goodness; Who therefore seeks that truth should be increased, beauty revealed, and goodness realised in every direction of human life.

We believe in more than the mere conservation of values of which we are "bearers." Belief in a personal God necessarily involves a moral responsibility for the propagation of scientific truth and the spread of beauty, as well as for the extension of the range of goodness. This even the true artist feels as strongly as it can be felt, engaged as he is in "mental fight":

> Bring me my bow of burning gold!
> Bring me my arrows of desire!
> Bring me my spear: O clouds unfold!
> Bring me my chariot of fire!

Moreover, the Christian doctrine of the personality of God involves that God who is Himself Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, desires to be known among men as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Scientific Truth with its discovery of an orderly system of nature, implies that our environment is at least one, a unification which has a profound influence on the way in which we conceive it to environ us.[2] Art is not merely the fixing

[1] Cf. A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, pp. 10 f.
[2] Cf. pp. 143 f., *infra*.

on canvas or the clothing in words of dreams and illusions; it actually conveys to the mind some account of reality and helps to build the world. It would be as wrong to say that the artist aims at beauty as to say that the good man aims at goodness. The desire for communication with the experience of others must not dominate it, but Art also has something it wishes to say. The cruelty, hardness, and ugliness of actual life may suggest the artist's subject, and cannot be excluded from his view on moral grounds, any more than they can be shielded from the gaze of the prophet; the artist's treatment of these, as has been well said, may suggest the way in which Reality deals with them. In him as in the poet, and in their work, the Universe may be offering us if only an incompletely satisfying glimpse of the way in which all problems of evil are solved.

> Into the breast that gives the rose,
> Shall I with shuddering fall?

Meredith's lines may be taken in the sense that all Values are meant to be realised in the concrete events of all human life, and are conserved in the final ordering of things.[1] The Kingdom of God is meaningless unless it comes.

[1] Cf. W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Re-making*, Chapter XXXVIII.

CHAPTER V

THE INHERENT CERTITUDE OF FAITH

I

Belief in God is essentially a personal act, and experience of God is essentially a state of the individual mind. What constitutes the ultimate basis of certainty? That basis cannot be found in some fact external to the experiencing mind; for such a fact would not be a fact at all but would be something quite unknowable. The basis cannot be found outside the experience. The validity of personal religious experience rests upon nothing other than itself; faith is fidelity to our own being.

The God in whom we trust is much more than a hypothesis which makes sense of the world as we know and experience it; in other words, causally explains it. As a matter of fact, the God of the Christian faith does not explain the world to us; but faith in such a God and communion with Him alone give meaningful content to our own personal feeling for values. Faith is not only the conviction that our values have objective existence, but also means essentially that they can be realised in the events of human life. Faith has no foundations other than itself; no Atlas is needed to sustain the weight of personal experience, though life itself contains much that succours and enriches it. The position is not that we discover the certainty *for* ourselves or by ourselves, but *in* ourselves. Christian experience either *is* faith or it is nothing.

Faith, regarded as having no foundations other than

itself, is not thereby removed from the category to which our knowledge of the external world belongs. Faith makes no other intellectual demand than is made by our experience of the external world.[1] There is a faith which lies at the root of all knowledge; the essence of reason is that it has a confidence, deeper than confidence in mere reasoning—a confidence in itself. The trend of modern scientific thought, as we shall see, is all in this direction. The assurance that in our approach to the world of facts, we have to do "not with a chaos but with a cosmos, a world whose laws may be infinitely complex and difficult to unravel, but which will never put us to permanent intellectual confusion . . . is unproved in the sense that we have not explored the whole of existence, and in the nature of the case can never hope to include all the facts within the net of reason."[2] This assurance of the unproved is in itself an act of faith. The scientific passion for simplification—the endeavour to avoid multiplying causes and to bring all facts into captivity to single principles—is itself an act of faith.

To return to religious faith. We have spoken of faith as being rooted in our "feeling" for values. It is necessary that we should clearly understand what we mean by "feeling" in this connexion. To say that faith is rooted in our feeling for values, is not to be confused with the position that our certainty of God, our sure sense of being in touch with God, is based upon the fact that we have certain feelings or "experiences." Religious experience is something much wider and deeper than a collection of isolated "experiences." "Feeling" is only part of an emotion and not synonymous with it. Love is an emotion, but its content is not exhausted by the feelings to which it gives rise. Faith in God, in the Christian sense, might be defined as love towards God. The classical definition

[1] Cf. p. 142, *infra*.

[2] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 239.

is "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." To ponder these words is to have courage to use the term "love of God" as a complete description of the highest religious experience, without any fear of saccharine or pathological interpretations. Warmth of religious feeling is not to be distrusted as a guarantee of truth; feeling is much more than "tender" feeling. "Love," says Francis Thompson, "is a Bethesda well, into which from time to time the angel of tenderness descends to trouble the waters for the healing of the beloved."[1] Religious experience has these moments marked by the visit of the "angel of tenderness" and prizes them highly; but, although it values these moments, their continuance is not indispensable for the assurance of its reality.

II

The true place of the feeling or affective element in religious experience is both strengthened and clarified by the psychological truth that an emotion is really a state of consciousness which includes both knowing and feeling and willing. A recent psychologist,[2] who has gone deeply into the foundations of human character, points out that the emotion of Love has been too exclusively interpreted from the material which introspection affords. As manifested in any single state of consciousness, it is one single emotion; as manifested in behaviour in different situations, it shows itself as a system of emotions. There are mental states of which introspection can give no accurate account. Love is one of these. Love responds to the presence of the loved one with joy, to absence with sorrow and longing; as love remembers the past, it is sometimes

[1] *Works*, III, p. 13 (*Essay on Shelley*).
[2] A. F. Shand, *The Foundations of Character*, pp. 55 ff.

full of hope, sometimes of remorse; danger produces anxiety:

> Love is joy and grief,
> And trembling doubt, and certain-sure belief,
> And fear, and hope, and longing unexpressed,
> In pain most human, and in rapture brief
> Almost divine.[1]

The unhappiness of the loved one provokes a certain effort of will to remove the source of unhappiness; if that is impossible, sympathy remains. Love illumines the understanding, increases the area of sensitiveness, and induces action. It enlists the service both of thought and will.

The same writer quotes the lines from *As You Like It*, where Phebe says:

> Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.

Silvius answers:

> It is to be made of sighs and tears
> . . . . .
> It is to be made of faith and service;
> . . . . .
> It is to be all made of phantasy,
> All made of passion and all made of wishes;
> All adoration, duty, and observance,
> All humbleness, all patience and impatience,
> All purity, all trial, all observance.[2]

We may usefully employ the term which Shand has made current coin. Love he defines as a *Sentiment*, a complex system of emotional dispositions.[3]

[1] H. Van Dyke, *Music:* The Symphony, 2.

[2] Act V, Sc. ii. The fact that Shakespeare is speaking of sexual love, does not make it impossible to apply what he says to religious experience. The sex-instinct, which in itself is neither good nor evil, is itself part of the instinctive foundation of religion.

[3] Cf. the suggestive treatment of the religious "Sentiment," by K. Edwards, *Religious Experience*, pp. 95 ff.

If we take love of God as a description of the highest religious experience and accept Shand's definition, we may speak of the religious Sentiment. Religious experience is really a complex, or rather a system of complexes—good complexes, if we may so say, and not bad ones. It is "a system of emotional dispositions organised around the objects of religion." Christian religious experience, which is created by the knowledge of God in Christ, is a sentiment where Love dominates, appearing in all the various feelings and kinds of behaviour and flights of speculation by which it makes its presence known. Moreover Love, in its religious meaning and reference, is a moral selective power, which is able to exclude certain emotions and kinds of behaviour from its system. Paul was a profound religious psychologist. "Love suffereth long and is kind: love envieth not: love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked." This aspect of religious experience as a sentiment is extraordinarily important. It makes it possible to include in religious experience, not only those moments when one particular kind of pleasurable feeling is present; it also gives value to those moments when thought or behaviour, not feeling, are uppermost. Further, it enables us to test our religious experience in an infinitely more searching way than mere introspection is able to do. It makes it impossible to separate faith and experience, or to attempt to base faith upon a prior experience. The conception of the religious sentiment has yet another most important result, inasmuch as it makes manifest that, as a system of emotional dispositions, religious experience is quite clearly not a mere product of the individual self; it is as much a part and product of our environment and tradition as we ourselves are. To create and foster this "sentiment" is the legitimate aim of religious education. The idea of the religious sentiment also enables us to avoid that isolation of feeling which

sometimes makes men suspect, because they are not always consciously aware of the presence of God, that their religious experience is unreal. Christian religious experience is distinct from all other kinds of religious experience, inasmuch as it is not " a flight of the alone into the alone " ; that is the pagan conception, even in its highest manifestations in the mystery religions. Christian experience is not merely a private question between a man and his Maker ; essentially not, as in a recent definition by a great modern scientist, " what the individual does with his own solitariness." [1]

III

The idea of the necessity of a conscious feeling of direct contact with a " God beyond " for the validity of religious experience, has in modern religious apologetic tended towards the position that faith must be founded on some external fact other than itself. The idea has been largely fostered by psychologists themselves. Ever since the appearance of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, the tendency has been to regard the " mystic consciousness," in the technical sense—the overwhelming sense of the " God beyond "—as the climax and truest expression of religious experience. There are several uses of the term " mysticism," but the mysticism here referred to is the type distinguished by " the ineffable perception of God," or " the experimental knowledge of God's indwelling and presence " ; some form or other of direct apprehension of God. I believe that while the mystic, in this sense, has intuition of religious reality, he brings the content of the intuition with him, as he " ascends " from what to him are lower levels of religious experience, but are not necessarily so ; the mystic brings no new knowledge of God into the world, only a new apprehension of His

[1] A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, pp. 47 ff.

presence and reality. It is high time that psychology should cease to be dominated by this conception of the religious consciousness, and like the great apostle, should cease to glory only in the experience of men who have been rapt into the seventh heaven.[1]

Further, a channel was suggested for this apprehension of the "God beyond" in the "subconscious," "subliminal consciousness," or "super-consciousness"—by whatever name we describe this psychological region. It has indeed been made plain that the "subconscious" is neither cleaner, more trustworthy, nor cleverer than we ourselves are; that much of it consists of experience which for one reason or another we have contrived to forget, or to which we do not attend; and that the rest is racial memory. To what extent it is true that there is material in the subconscious which was at one time consciously experienced, and how far it contains material derived through heredity, are matters on which I need not enter. The fact remains that both this insistence on the subconscious, and undue emphasis on the mystic experience, are really symptoms of an unwillingness to trust the religious experience of the non-mystic type of man. The non-mystic man need not be a "once-born," as against a "twice-born" creature. Yet the facts of religious experience on which psychologists have founded their theories, have been largely collected—mostly by means of *questionnaires*—from those who are in the habit of introspecting themselves; in other words, from the religious "consciousness," and not from the wider area of religious experience. Indulgence in this habit of introspection in itself betokens a certain distrust of our own experience, and inevitably leads to

[1] A good example of the confusion produced by the isolation of the abnormal element in religious experience as though it were the whole, is found in Dr A. N. Whitehead's treatment. He speaks of intuition as "a private psychological habit . . . without general evidential force" (*Religion in the Making*, p. 65).

the attempt to base faith upon some foundation outside the immediate area of consciousness.

The most recent attempt to discover a basis for faith other than faith itself has actually been made by Dr Rudolf Otto in his book, *The Idea of the Holy*.[1] The essence of his position is that the religious sentiment contains a feeling-element which is accompanied by a psychosis of a kind not found in any other region of experience. This psychosis—it would be misleading to call it a state of mind—he calls the *numinous*. It seems to be the accompaniment of an almost quasi-physical direct contact with Deity, and is a feeling which is said to contain no rational (in the sense of conceptual) element, nor any ethical element. "If there be any single domain of human experience," he says, "that presents us with something unmistakably specific and unique, peculiar to itself, assuredly it is that of the religious life." Otto multiplies words to emphasise the absolute uniqueness of the *numinous*. It is analogous to, and indeed tends to be synonymous with, the feeling of the "eerie," the "spooky," the "weird." If to have "goose-flesh" can be called behaviour, the feeling of "goose-flesh" is the way in which we react to the *numinous*. Elsewhere Otto elevates the *numinous* into a "unique numinous category of value, perfectly *sui generis*, and irreducible to any other."

The utterly perplexing aspect of Otto's theory is that, before he is done, he reintroduces the rational and the ethical into religious experience, although not a trace of these is said to be found in the "numinous." Religious experience is cleft in twain at its very outset. "Its non-rational content has, no less than its rational, its own independent roots in the hidden depths of the spirit itself."[2] It seems to be "born twins." Both the rational and the non-rational elements in religious

[1] English translation by J. W. Harvey.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

experience are said to be *a priori* elements; but our minds stop working altogether when we are told that the connexion between them is, though not a logical necessity, yet also *a priori*. The twins are not quite, but almost, "Siamese twins"!

I cannot help thinking that a certain motive is here at work. That motive it is important to note in view of our problem of the validity of personal experience. Otto is seeking to find a basis, independent of and outside of the experiencing personality, for religious experience. That basis makes itself felt in a kind of contact with Deity—a sense of the "sacred" or "holy"—which is absent in the ordinary experience of common things. It seems to be an attempt to establish the sacredness of religious experience by secularising all other kinds of experience. What really is at work is a distrust of experience—the same kind of distrust which seeks an unerring authority in Church or Bible. Of Christian experience he says: "The lucid edifice of its clear and pure conceptions, feelings, and experiences is built up on a foundation that goes far deeper than the rational (the conceptual). Yet the non-rational is only the basis, the setting, the woof in the fabric."[1] The argument represents a return to the position that Christian certainty is based not on normal experience, but on some kind of vague mysterious spiritual state which lives on "experiences." There is supposed to be an element of "givenness" in valid religious experience, what Otto calls a sense of "the wholly other"[2] than ourselves, which brings authoritative certainty. Now, "givenness" is notoriously untrustworthy ground on which to rest, especially when, as in Otto's theory, the "given" element produces only a kind of shuddering awe, without any material

[1] *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 146.

[2] We must not deny the presence of the "wholly other" in religious experience; but it must be interpreted ethically. Otto's "wholly other" excludes the ethical interpretation.

for a conceptual apprehension. Often one of the hardest exercises of religious experience is to distinguish between what God gives and the Devil gives. "Givenness" is a picture and a picture only, of what happens to us in our perception of an external world, which is carried over into our attitude toward spiritual reality. Our perceptions of external reality are "given"; not, however, in the sense that external reality is something outside us which as it were "hits" us. All mental processes which accompany the coming into consciousness of anything of which we were previously unconscious are marked by "givenness." They are not thereby determined as real; givenness characterises dreams also; it is on other grounds than their givenness that we determine the objective validity of our perceptions. The "God beyond" of mysticism is a kind of spatial conception which is an inference from the working of the mind in ordinary experience.[1]

Religious experience cannot be thus broken in two. Otto says in one place: "To be *rapt* in worship is one thing, to be morally *uplifted* by the contemplation of a good deed is another. They have common features, but in the former there are elements of emotional content peculiar to it."[2] That is a position which strikes at the root of any doctrine of the Divine omnipresence. Christianity teaches that God is Love; to deny that the experience of an actual morally impelling and coercive power present in a sacrificial deed of love, is an experience of God—girding it may be those who know Him not—is to ignore a potent aspect of Christian apologetic. It is also in effect to deny that in the great deed of the Cross, men have seen God. Jesus made no such ultimate distinction as that between the moral uplift of a good deed and being rapt in worship. Rather he closely related them: "If thou art offering

[1] Cf. R. H. Thouless, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 267 ff.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, go, first be reconciled to thy brother." Neighbourly action and love to God are aspects of one experience; both are ethical. Religious experience is not confined to moments when we are personally aware that God is present; or to those moments when we are sadly and penitentially aware of His absence in our souls, and seek His presence. Life as a whole is the sphere of religion, and our moments of actual awareness of God—what we are accustomed to call "sacred" moments—really focus for us all the widespread unidentified experience of God in ordinary life; our "Bethels," with all their "numinous" content, are not to be isolated as though they were our only basis of certainty; their content and message is: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whithersoever thou goest." "Whoever knows no such moments in his experience," says Otto, "is requested to read no further."[1] The hyper-Calvinistic doctrine of election with its demand for "assurance," is not more ruthless than Otto can be in his insistence on the "numinous" as an essential element in real religious experience.

Of course it is only the *absolute* uniqueness of the "numinous" in religious experience that we are concerned to deny; not its truth as an unique element in certain aspects of Christian religious experience. The "holy" or "sacred" in religion is not, it is true, originally an ethical or rational concept at all; it is good that we be reminded, in the midst of our present-day rightful insistence on the immanence of God, that God is also "wholly other" than ourselves, and that "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." The "numinous," however, has for Christian experience no religious value, except in so far as it has ethical content and is bound up with a conception of God.

[1] *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 8.

It is not the feeling of the "numinous" but its reference, that is the distinctive thing. Awe and reverence are fitting in God's presence, and are aroused both by our sense of creaturely dependence upon the God we trust and by the awakened sense of sin. There is in Christian experience of God both an element that beckons and an element that repels; but the awesome feeling that repels and makes the man conscious that the Lord is "high and lifted up" is essentially ethical.

Otto seems to me to have reintroduced into the conception of religious experience a confusion similar to that produced by the old theory of inspiration. The average mind was perplexed by the question whether poets and artists were inspired as well as prophets. The answer becomes simple when we remember that all inspiration is of God; that prophets are often poets; that they are distinguished from other poets, not by their manner of apprehension, but by the ideas they apprehend. Similarly, the man who is rapt in worship and the man who gives a cup of cold water in the name of Christ, are both apprehending God, though the ideas that direct their behaviour are not the same. This awesome sense of the holy as "the wholly other" is indeed "the fear of the Lord"; but "the fear of the Lord" is also "the beginning of wisdom." The rational is not absent even in the "numinous"; it is, at least, the sense that man stands before a reality in whose presence he may not do what he likes, nor follow the devices and desires of his own heart;[1] here surely we have the seeds at least of rational and ethical progress. Otto's theory also seems to bring back the misleading conception of a special religious instinct, as well as to revive, in spite of his own disclaimer, the ancient, now discredited idea, *primus in orbe deos fecit timor*—"fear is the mother of the gods." In general, he seems to base religion on

[1] Cf. *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 287.

what is not religion at all.[1] There are " varieties " of religious experience, and the variety does not invalidate the ultimate truth of religion. The sense of moral obligation, the apprehension of beauty (an æsthetic reference of a religious feeling), the sight of a selfless act equally with the sense of awe in the presence of vastness or death, all are aspects of religious experience. Each of them contains a reverent sense of " the wholly other " than ourselves.

We must be careful to hold fast the view that religious experience is not an external guarantee for faith, but is indeed faith itself. Remove the element of venture from faith, and you do not thereby establish its authority; you rob it of the source of authority itself. The venture of faith does not mean that we dispense with the conceptual element and take a leap in the dark, or that we are seeking to verify a hypothesis, or are exercising a kind of moral courage which can dispense with any sure beliefs at all and refuses to speculate. We are driven back inevitably as our ultimate authority, on those values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, which come to birth in the experience of human personalities; on the assurance that the emergence of those values in our experience is really a world of eternal values, beckoning us to enter it. Faith brings its own assurance, and without assurance it ceases to be faith. Religious faith is a faith in the ultimate reality and triumph of good, yet without a guarantee that our individual act of faith will actually succeed in this world; Christian faith has never been deeply concerned as to whether it " works." R. L.

[1] D. M. Baillie (*Faith in God*, p. 211, n. 1), in the course of an illuminating discussion of Otto's theory, points out how many of the terms used by him in his analysis of " numinous " feeling, are drawn from ancient languages, or from regions which we should not now associate with religion at all. A supreme example is the term " divination " as a psychological equivalent of the *testimonium spiritus sancti* (p. 149).

Stevenson's "faithful failure" is the noblest achievement of faith. The faith of religious experience is a way of living, suffering, sacrificing, rejoicing, in a world where we are persuaded that scorpions are not given for fish, nor stones for bread; that the occasions which call for suffering and sacrifice are moments as real as those that call for rejoicing; that they are not mere casual happenings in the life of the universe. In the end, the authority of religious experience rests on our conception of the ultimate reality of which our experience is an organic part.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUESTION OF EVIL

It has been well said that one of the chief difficulties of modern Christian apologetic is, that men are not asking the questions which the Christian Gospel answers. Even when the questions are being asked we may go farther, and say that men are not asking the questions in the form to which the Christian Gospel is an answer. Evil emerges in our experience as Pain, and as Sin; experience bids us put questions regarding both these. The form of our question depends on whether we feel the discord of evil within us or without. The form of question answered by the Christian Gospel is always dictated by the sense of discord within.

Considering first the question of Sin, we must be prepared to accept the position that we are personally responsible for our own wrongdoing, before we can begin to understand the answer of the Christian Gospel. Even the acknowledgment of the forces of destiny or heredity cannot drive us into any position where conscience dares to be silent, or induce us to cast the burden of responsibility for wrongdoing on past or present circumstance. Even sins of ignorance demand forgiveness; "forgive them, for they know not what they do." We all realise how sins of ignorance —ignorance of other men's moral weakness, blindness to their good, indifference to their need; ignorance of the power of ingrained habit in ourselves or others; light-hearted ignorance of the forces fighting against us—may set in motion drifts of evil, bringing sheer moral and physical disaster. The Christian Gospel gives its answer only to a question put in the form:

"What must I do to be saved?" It is a Gospel of redemption, and does not deal directly with intellectual problems. We are apt to think far too exclusively of the "problem" of evil. The saint is as great a problem as the sinner.

We have no reason to quarrel with the truth of the modern emphasis—due largely to the influence of biology—on heredity and circumstance as prominent ingredients of every personal life. Every life includes a preponderating element of fate and circumstance, as well as the elements of will and choice. The long hands of bygone centuries and generations are laid on each one of us, and we cannot escape their power. The traditions and beliefs in which we are reared, the country to which we belong, racial characteristics, the instincts we inherit, the social conditions into which we are born, directly transmitted strains both of moral weakness and of moral strength—all these have gone to make up our personalities. Take away inheritance and environment and there is little of any of us left. Some of this inheritance is good, and some bad; but we must be prepared to develop our personality by acceptance of moral responsibility for our reaction to our environment, be it good or bad. We need to go back to the old Greek conception of *moira* or fate;—a portion assigned, though not necessarily, as the Greeks thought, something irresistible and intransmutable. If I may take an example from modern fiction, Thomas Hardy depicts many of his characters as apparently puppets of circumstance, and is at the same time continually protesting against the appearance of puppetry: "Puppetry and feeling are incompatible." To him life is not merely like the uncoiling of a rope; the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, and the weakest man may be the fittest to survive. Among all the writers of modern fiction, Hardy appears to me as one of the few whose characters cry: "What must I do to be saved?" He

has indeed no answer himself to give, but does help us to reject merely facile or superficial answers; in his presentation of human nature he has kept alive the sense of individual value at least in the hearts of his readers, and his view of human nature is rarely cynical and despairing. Probably it was this consciousness that made him so sensitive to the charge of pessimism. Of this pessimism we need more to-day; for, as Hardy himself said, this so-called pessimism is akin to the pessimism that lies at the root of the Christian faith. There is however one important difference which he overlooks. His pessimism is induced by a full look at the worst; the Christian pessimism is really begotten of a full look at the best. The influence of Jesus Christ and his teaching, as we have already seen, both increases our sensitiveness to all kinds of evil and deepens our feeling of personal responsibility, and at the same time increases our power. We must ask questions about sin and moral responsibility in the form which Christ has created in the hearts of men. A religion of redemption such as Christianity is, alone dares to dictate such a form.

Similarly, the problem of pain must be viewed in its personal aspect. Our individual experience of pain alone gives pain its reality, and compels us to feel its pressure. We cannot separate suffering from the sufferer, any more than we can separate sin from the individual sinner. There is really no such thing as a "mass" of pain. "This great mass of human pain is distributed amongst a countless multitude of souls."[1] This endless distribution increases vastly the pressure and extent of pain in the individual heart, until in the hearts of those who have suffered most greatly, we feel the sweep of

> Desperate tides of the whole world's anguish
> Forced through the channels of a single heart.

[1] W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 345.

That thousands should suffer and not tens, does tremendously increase the amount of suffering in the world; but the increase is not due to our having undertaken a sum in addition. It is due to the realisation that each of the countless multitude bears his own burden, and each heart knows its own bitterness; each of them clamours for his own redemption; or in proportion to the sensitiveness of the individual heart, for the deliverance of those whose sorrow is laid on the individual's compassion. Those who suffer themselves, or suffer with their fellows, are not really dealing with a problem. "Problem" is a bad word to use. It suggests that we are on the outlook for a system of philosophy or an explanation of things. The concern of religion is not with the structure of our environment, but again, let it be said, with the way in which it environs us as personal beings. It is in individual experience that pain is felt. Dr S. H. Mellone[1] tells of a conversation he had in a Government Department during the War with "a level-headed man of the world who had not appeared to be much affected by the sufferings caused by the War." He had learned of a mother with four sons fighting on four different fronts. All were killed, and the four messages reached her on the same day. "It's too cruel," he said, "it's too cruel." It is in individual experience that the stark reality of pain comes home to us, and it must be to individual experience that deliverance, the only solution that satisfies, is given. The question of pain must arise from within us; to forget this is to become deaf to the greatest answer we have, based on human experience, to the perplexing fact of pain. We miss the sight of the individual sufferer who has braced himself to endure pain that cannot be removed; who is aware, in a measure possible only to himself, both of what he can suffer and of what he can do; who makes his own silent agreement with God which brings the

[1] *The Price of Progress*, p. 15.

light of breaking dawn into his face and sheds it on his path.[1] We have no right to exclude such answers from the area of thought when we face the question of pain.

We must, I think, agree with Canon Streeter that from the intellectual point of view, pain is a much more perplexing problem than sin.[2] The problem of sin is at least eased by the consideration that a power freely to choose good necessarily involves freedom to choose evil. It is eased, even in face of the great perplexity that the actual wrongdoer does not always pay the penalty; no such easement is possible for the problem of pain. The argument that *all* pain and suffering are ultimately due to a defect of faith in the supernatural power made accessible to the world through Jesus Christ, inevitably raises more questions than it solves. In particular it seems to imply the assumption that there is a whole aspect of life whose existence is apart from the will of God. The position issues in a kind of modern Manichæism, and demands that all pain must ultimately be of Satanic origin. Such is the impression made on my mind by considerable portions of the argument in Professor D. S. Cairns's recent powerful and challenging book, *The Faith that Rebels*. "The positive evils which man endures from the great system of Nature are contingent either upon his departure from true and worthy ways of thinking and living, or his failure to attain them. . . . *They are not parts of the Divine and eternal order at all.*"[3] If so, what are they? Unrealities? Can we deny their place in the divine order when the very evil forces at work in them are ultimately transmuted by the goodness which conquers them by sheer endurance? George Eliot in the Epilogue to *Romola*, speaking of the happiness that belongs to evil endured and overcome, says that "it often brings so much pain with it, that we can only

[1] These words are suggested by Dr Sorley's noble passage (*op. cit.*, p. 345).

[2] *Reality*, p. 58 n. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 151. The italics are mine.

tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good." It would indeed be an indictment of the moral order, were it conceivable that if goodness could be achieved by any other means than conflict with evil, that other way should have been hidden from our eyes. Even granting that a vast amount of the world's pain is due to man's inhumanity and ignorance and therefore ultimately preventable, its incidence in the selection of those who suffer is mysterious and uncharted. Of the origin of pain we may know nothing; probably of most of the origins of things that matter we shall always know little: of the use of pain, "the pain," as Paul says, "that God is allowed to guide,"[1] we have wondering reason to know much. We know the courage and tenderness of those who suffer.

God's answer to our questionings about pain and evil are given by One whose purpose it is to recreate and educate men into beings capable of communion with Himself. The answer is intelligible and sufficient only to those who earnestly seek the removal of all moral hindrances to the understanding and carrying out of the Divine purpose. There is no actual solution to the problem. The use of "cribs" or "tables of answers" by the pupil in his studies may be disastrous, discouraging as it does all personal effort and leading to the mirage of a knowledge acquired without the experience of trial or possible error. The "crib" method keeps the user ignorant of the chief difficulties; undisciplined, and largely impervious to the spirit and meaning of the author. The Christian message is not to be regarded by us as a schoolboy might regard a "crib" to a difficult piece of translation. God's answers to man's questionings are not ready-made solutions, intended for those who are content to have such solutions. Life is indeed not a vale of tears but "a vale of soul-making"; yet we have no reason to

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 10 (Moffatt).

think that souls can be made without tears. God's answer in Jesus Christ is the illumination of suffering; an actual increase of our sensitiveness to pain and sin, an increased perception of the real problems of life, a deepened sympathy with those on whom they press hardest, and at the same time, a heartening sense of our being "fellow-labourers" with God. Problems of pain and sin must be grappled with personally. We are not spectators but combatants, and more than half the "problems of pain" are raised by spectators. Those who actually suffer, and are conscious of the inspiring leadership of God in Jesus Christ, should be allowed to tell their own marvellous story of the easy yoke and the burden that is light. The mere spectator can know nothing of that personal faith which frees the spirit of the sufferer, and enables him both to suffer and to transmute suffering "into glorious gain." He was a combatant, and not a spectator who said: "All things work together for good to them that love God."

The Christian attitude towards the problem of evil is not that we have attained a complete solution or explanation, but that we work and strive and suffer, in the light and not in the dark. At the same time, the Christian attitude towards evil has always widened out into an attitude towards and a valuation of our whole environment or universe. The content of Christian experience includes a demonstration, within the limits of human life, that in God Himself there is both an infinite capacity for suffering, and an inexhaustible power of transmuting suffering into the triumphant joy of self-sacrificing love. This divine transmuting power is given to the sufferer, by communion with God:

> I can believe this dread machinery
> Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else
> Devised,—all pain, at most expenditure
> Of pain by who devised pain,—to evolve,
> By new machinery in counterpart,
> The moral qualities of man.

The only answer that can be given to the apparent neutrality of Nature to human pain is the answer of our experience of God in Jesus Christ. If we assume that God is like Jesus Christ, any difference in our conception of the Divine attitude towards good and evil, compared with our own human attitude, is in the direction not of minimising the felt distinction between good and evil, but of intensifying it. God is in all things and over all things; He can find a way out of all things for us because He is in them. The Christian doctrine of God is a direct denial of the neutrality of Nature to human pain. "All things work together for good *to them that love God*." No interpretation of the suffering of Christ is complete unless we recognise in it the truth that God's Nature does not exclude actual suffering.

> What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
> But just the instance which this tale supplies
> Of love without a limit?

Except on the basis of a belief that suffering is in the Divine Nature, it is difficult to understand why it is that the deeper their communion with God, the more sensitive do men become to the sheer burning contradiction of pain. The pain of bereavement is vastly increased by the enrichment of human love which Christian experience brings. Von Hügel, who rejects the notion of the suffering of God, yet impressively points out, that Christianity "has from the first immensely deepened and widened, it has further revealed, not the 'explanation'—which never existed for us men—but the fact, the reality, the awful potency and baffling mystery of sorrow, pain, sin, things which abide with man across the ages. And Christianity has, from the first, immensely increased the capacity, the wondrous secret and force which issues in a practical, living, loving, transcendence, utilisation, transformation of sorrow and pain, and even of sin."[1] In the strength

[1] F. Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 111 ff.

of this "demonstration," Christianity has conquered all philosophies like Gnosticism or Epicureanism, which tend to ignore, or minimise, or regard as unreal, physical and moral evil. We dare not regard pain as something apart from God's will and purpose.

The Christian God is the God of the universe. Paul did not derive from the influences of Hellenistic philosophy the impulse for the mighty stroke of speculation whereby he Christianises the universe; his experience of God in Christ was sufficient. Jesus Christ himself taught that the overcoming of evil in the heart of every sinner that repents reverberates through the universe, and brings "joy in the presence of the angels of God." The relation between moral evil and physical pain is much more intimate than we suppose; no physical pain or outward disaster can be borne or transmuted or overcome without the expenditure of faith and moral energy: both affect our practical attitude towards the universe, and our conviction of the absolute values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

Dr Albert Schweizer in one of his books strangely likens the love of God to the Gulf Stream. A stream of warm water flowing from Equator to Pole, it moves as within banks, between the cold waters of the ocean. "Similarly," he adds, "there is the God of Love within the God of the forces of the universe—one with Him, yet so totally different."[1]

A love of God like a warm stream, flowing between the far-stretching banks of a cold and impassive universe, leaves us with an intolerable weight of uncertainty about God in our hearts.[2] The full Christian faith is that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is in all things, and over all things; belief in the Holy Spirit involves the faith that the Christian God is in all the forces of the universe. Paul speaks of Christ's

[1] *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, p. 78.

[2] Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, p. 158, from which I borrow the illustration.

body, the Church, as "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" ("filled by him who fills the universe entirely" (Moffatt)). Paul's universe is the product of his own individual experience. Jesus alone, by his death and resurrection, has made us sure that the love which was incarnate in him, is one with a "love that moves the sun and all the stars." We may indeed describe the impact of our full Christian experience in Dante's words:

> Force was to my desire and will applied
> By Love that moves the sun and all the stars.

This coercion is the coercion of Love. Love occupies no room; it may therefore be everywhere. It must be everywhere, if God is Love.

Is such a faith possible for us to-day? Our universe, we say, is vaster and infinitely more complicated than that of Jesus or Paul or Dante. It is both vast, and also microscopically small; contains stars and electrons; is one of many universes. Moreover man is no longer the centre of the universe; he is a very late-comer indeed; the winds do not blow, the sun does not shine, the rain does not fall for him alone. Rain falls "on a land where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man."[1] I question whether our universe, with all its infinite expansion, even appears any vaster or more terrifying to us, than his appeared to a man of the first century A.D. I question whether our universe is really so terrifying as Paul's was. There was an element of hideous uncertainty in Paul's universe through the existence of innumerable "demons," "in the air around us," of whose intentions no one could be sure: ours is a universe governed by law and order; Science has removed many formerly incalculable sources of terror, and has given us the power to forecast and foretell. In prescientific days there was no sense of natural law; all depended on the will of God, His

[1] Job xxxviii. 26.

" covenant " with men, as the Hebrew would have said. That prescientific universe must have been a greater burden to faith than ours, where the orderliness and uniformity revealed by Science are at least a sacrament of the trustworthiness of God. But, after all, neither for us nor for Paul is the " terror " of nature induced by looking at the universe as a spectacle ; as something outside ourselves, a picture at which we gaze. Evil, both pain and sin, is within us and not without ; it is an experience. Life always means that we are a conscious part of this universe ; we know it from within, in all that happens to us and to others ; any judgment regarding the universe, such as that it is neutral and indifferent to the great human values, is after all but the result of picture-thinking, a projection of our own which we have wrongly referred to the great whole.

The judgment that God in the universe is like Christ, is also an experience of ours which Christ creates within us—the experience of salvation. We may well ask why the spectacle of nature's moral neutrality and indifference should be able so easily to " fill all things " for us, while the experience of God, created within us by Jesus, is prevented from interpreting to us the whole of Reality. Jesus continually taught that no limits can be imposed to our trust in God, and that we need have no anxiety. To him evil never seems to have presented itself as a problem, or a spectacle ; but always as an opportunity for healing, sacrificial love, and deliverance. Is this not the supreme example and the supreme succour of faith, that the mystery of evil pressed least on one who knew it most completely where it can best be known—from within ?[1] Jesus never called attention to his own sufferings. In the Gospels, the story of the Cross is told, in that same spirit, with a marvellous reserve. May that not be because the Cross, followed by the Resur-

[1] Cf. C. C. J. Webb, *Problems*, pp. 268 f.

rection, was ultimately seen as victory and not as defeat; as a source of triumphant happiness, and as the defeat of "principalities and powers," the cosmic powers of evil? The historical fact of Jesus Christ and of his Cross is our supreme assurance that our highest "values," particularly goodness, are of the stuff of Reality.

PART II

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

I. Jesus and the Church
II. Institutional Authority
III. Historical Continuity
IV. Corporate and Individual Faith
V. Creeds and the Problem of Revision

CHAPTER I

JESUS AND THE CHURCH

JESUS CHRIST undoubtedly regarded his own personal mission as confined to his own nation : " I am not sent, save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." We must, however, note that these words were spoken in the hearing of a Gentile woman, and that he granted her what she asked. The journey of the moment was undertaken as a temporary escape for his own spirit and the spirit of his disciples, from the hostility, criticism, traditionalism, and imperviousness of the Jewish religious authorities. Unexpectedly he found a response in a pagan heart, as happened more than once, which was denied him in Jewry. Shall he not go where response is more likely to come ? There is a suggestion of the same human mood in Wordsworth's lines :

> Great God ! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
> So might I standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.

I always feel that the words of our Lord just quoted, mark a conquest of himself, and a courageous, self-sacrificing determination, in obedience to God's will and at the utmost cost, to devote what remained of his life to his own people. There is nothing in the words to suggest that he did not look upon his message as world-wide ; neither is there anything in them to induce the belief that the new society which he undoubtedly contemplated, was to be a mere con-

tinuance, in form and basis, of the Church-nation of Israel.

Neither the institutional form nor the outward destiny of the Church were regarded by Jesus as questions that arose out of his immediate mission.[1] This attitude, however, cannot simply be attributed to his eschatological conception of a near consummation. However brief he may have conceived the interval to be between the present moment and the advent of the Kingdom in power, three things are certain: *first*, that he contemplated the formation of a new society; *second*, that his lack of concern regarding its institutional form is not due to any sense that the time is so short that considerations of outward form were irrelevant; *third*, that in the disciple band, the nucleus of the new society, he had already to combat wrong ideas of its outward form. Its organisation and government were not to be on the pattern of the kingdoms of the world: "The Kings of the Gentiles exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you." The amazing statement is made by Bishop Gore[2] that Jesus "showed no objection to the existence of a hierarchy of orders. In his own new society, as we shall see, he established a body of officers, clothed with authority." As well might it be said that Jesus "showed no objection" to the existence of slavery! To determine the right or the wrong of elements in the present constitution of society or the Church by conserving those to which Jesus Christ "showed no objection," is to make any kind of advance impossible. Jesus is solely concerned with the spirit of faith, humility, and service that should animate the members of the new society. "Its form, like all other things

[1] In this whole section, I am deeply indebted to *The Church and the Divine Order*, by Principal J. Oman, and to his article "Church" in Hastings' DRE. III. Cf. also J. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 187 f.

[2] *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 67.

of the morrow, he committed to his Heavenly Father."[1]

We cannot appeal to the fact that Jesus accepted the institutional forms of the Jewish religion. Jesus is indeed no mere rebel. He broke the canonical law by touching a leper—not deliberately, but moved by compassion; then tells him "to show himself to the priest." Jesus recognised the value of the institutional for this man as indicating to him that his cure had been wrought by the power of God. He acknowledges in men a certain habituation to ordinary religious practice and custom, which to observe does not render them disloyal to his own teaching and example, but leaves them free to obey the spirit of his teaching, at whatever ultimate cost to the outward institution. The real cost was not felt until Paul entered on his campaign for spiritual freedom, at a moment when, in obedience to the new impulse of the Spirit, the conflict had really ripened. Jesus' attitude to every form of institution or of doctrine which he accepted from his environment, shows clearly that he was free to criticise from a standpoint that might be dangerous to the institution; but also that his intention was not to waste time or energy in attacking institutions. He is concerned solely with their spirit: "Did not he that made the outside make the inside of things also?"[2] The Spirit will create its own organisation. The Spirit of Jesus, where it is purely obeyed, inevitably shatters merely legal systems both of morality and of institutional authority. He uttered some of his most revolutionary maxims almost by the way. Once, in a cornfield, he spoke of the divine institution of the Sabbath as one whose outward form was subservient to the needs of men: "The Sabbath was made for man." He actually shattered a great part of the divine institution of the ceremonial law when he touched a leper, or when he insisted that not what entered into a man but what came out of him,

[1] J. Oman, *The Church and the Divine Order*, p. 35. [2] Lk. xi. 40.

defiled. These are revolutionary conceptions indeed, when we remember the current ecclesiastical conceptions of the Sabbath and the Law generally; the Sabbath was a cosmic fact, brought into being at Creation when God rested on the seventh day; the whole Law was looked upon as we to-day might look on the laws of the universe.

At the same time we cannot doubt that Jesus was aware of the direction in which the new Spirit would lead his followers. They were to become a society whose source and governing motive was personal loyalty to himself, and whose principles of organisation were to be love, humility, and self-denial. That the outward form of the organisation was indicated only by telling men what it ought not to be, is in complete accordance with Jesus' emphasis on the creative spirit which was to animate the whole; to the creative spirit no foreordained structure can be assigned. He was aware that the new Society, the creation of God Himself, would be tempted to shape itself, under the pressure of natural human motive and environment, on the model of earthly institutions and kingdoms. On the contrary, the new Christian society will be framed on such a new model as to excite the hatred and suspicion of the world; mutual service is the only basis of authority: "He that would be first among you, let him be your servant." Jesus did not directly antagonise contemporary political despotism; but the new society is not to be conceived in its likeness. The Church is God's creation—be its duration long or short; it is to be a society distinct both from the nation and from the world, their salt and light; *my* Church, in contrast with the Church-nation, or even the "church in the wilderness."

If therefore we cannot claim the legal authority of Jesus for the validity of any historical form of Church government or of the means by which its authority is to be exercised, we have what is infinitely more valuable:

we have a supreme standard by which we can put to the test all the institutional development of the Church throughout the centuries. The Church at the first was distinguished from the kingdom; it was the fellowship, as it has been put, of those who are fitted to receive it at God's hands: "Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Westminster Confession of Faith[1] contains the interesting words: "This Catholick church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible"; no absolute distinction is drawn between the church invisible and the church visible; the assumption is that there is really no particular church so pure that it can claim to be "the church visible," the complete outward authoritative expression of the will of God. The authority of the Church is not an authority that is imposed upon the minds and hearts of men, but an authority that imposes itself in proportion as it convinces men that its doctrine, life, and constitution are in harmony with the ultimate truth of the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ. He is the Founder of the Church, though not in the sense that he foresaw its historical form and laid down the laws of its external organisation; the historical forms which the Church has assumed have been the result of a series of experiments, and could not therefore have been foreseen. Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Church, in the sense that the impulse which gave it birth and brought together again the society of disciples which had been scattered by his death—an impulse unknown in his own lifetime—sprang from the invincible enthusiasm begotten by the faith that Jesus is One who lives and was dead, and is the Lord and Saviour of his people for all eternity.

[1] Chapter XXV, iv.

CHAPTER II

INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

Believing individuals from the first, were formed into a society which is both the spontaneous expression of individual faith and an organisation which puts a check on the futile and disruptive influence of a purely individualistic religious experience. "We have now humanised the figure of Jesus, and we have done something to humanise the doctrine of God. But we have not yet humanised our conception of the Church."[1] Thought swings to-day between two conceptions of the Church: one regarding it as distinct from all other institutions and the one supernatural social institution, with a superhuman ministry and superhuman sacraments; another, that regards it as either a powerful religious mechanism for social service, or as a more or less voluntary association for the preservation of sound doctrine. In both conceptions, the sheer humanity of the Church is overlaid. Our first contact with the Church is a human contact; we are born of the Church and into it; the Church is our spiritual mother, the "Bride" of Jesus Christ. Calvin's words are much to the point: "Let us learn by the mere name of Mother how profitable, indeed how necessary is the knowledge of her; since there is no other entrance into life, unless she herself conceive us in her womb, unless she bear us, unless she foster us at her breast, unless she guard us under her care and government, until we put off this mortal flesh, and become like the angels. Our infirmity does not allow us to leave

[1] W. R. Sperry, *Reality in Worship*, p. 28; a book full of suggestion.

school, until we shall have been her life-long pupils." [1]

We need only recall our childhood's experience; the quiet of the house of God, the behaviour of the worshippers, the baptismal service, the mysterious sight of the communion-table, the common prayer and common praise, the reading and preaching of the Word,—all these made their only half-understood impression upon us. In our childhood's experience of the worship of the Church, we are but passing through a stage which characterises all religious development; customs and rites always precede any clear thought about them. In the home, even among many who have drifted away from the fellowship, the great human occasions—birth, the coming of maturity, love, marriage, death,—are associated with the Church. Such associations may not always be pentecostal, but not on that account unreal; they may even be said to excel in power, reach, and permanence, the more direct influences of instruction and the preaching of the Word; they are human associations created for us through living and believing human personalities, —parent, minister, teacher, fellow-communicant.

Religious habits, even when they assert themselves only on these great human occasions I have mentioned, are manifestations of second-nature. We must always distinguish between second-nature, and whatever in thought or practice is obviously second-hand. Von Hügel stresses this human aspect of the Church when he says that Christianity is "irreducibly incarnational"; not a religion of disembodied spirit; not merely a message: it makes a powerful appeal also to the senses of men. Thomas Carlyle in his own prophetic way, is leaving something out of account when he says:

> "How did Christianity arise and spread abroad among men? Was it by institutions, and establishments and well-

[1] *Institutes*, IV, i, 4.

> arranged systems of mechanism? Not so; on the contrary, in all past and existing institutions for those ends, its divine spirit has invariably been found to languish and decay. It arose in the mystic deeps of man's soul; and was spread abroad by the 'preaching of the word,' by simple, altogether natural and individual efforts; and flew like hallowed fire from heart to heart, till all were purified and illumined by it. . . . Here again was no Mechanism; man's highest attainment was accomplished Dynamically, not Mechanically."[1]

Only a half-truth is uttered in these words. Institutions, mechanisms, customs, are "incarnational." No spiritual movement is safe without some form of society, a "mechanism" to relate it to the world. We cannot confine the authority of the Church to the spoken word and to the influence of prophetic personalities; there is an habitual authoritative influence of the institution which is much more than unintelligent custom or superstitious deference. The Church is the "body of Christ"; his hands, eyes, and voice. A visible community was necessary in order that he might be still visible; and virtue still goes out of him for all who touch even the hem of his garment.

The authoritative witness of the Church as an institution is focused in its worship. Let me remind you of that most striking passage in *Marius the Epicurean*, where are described the feelings of the young pagan as he saw, for the first time, a Christian congregation at worship—"the wonderful spectacle of those who believe." The whole chapter must be read, but I quote this paragraph:

> There were noticeable, among those present, great varieties of rank, of age, of personal type. The Roman *ingenuus*, with the white toga and gold ring, stood side by side with his slave; and the air of the whole company was, above all, a grave one, an air of recollection. Coming thus unexpectedly upon this large assembly, so entirely united, in a silence so profound, for purposes unknown to him, Marius felt for a

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays: Signs of the Times*, II, p. 242.

> moment as if he had stumbled by chance upon some great conspiracy. Yet that could scarcely be, for the people here collected might have figured as the earliest handsel, or pattern, of a new world, from the very face of which discontent had passed away. Corresponding to the variety of human type there present, was the various expression of every form of human sorrow assuaged. What desire, what fulfilment of desire, had wrought so pathetically on the features of these ranks of aged men and women of humble condition? Those young men, bent down so discreetly on the details of their sacred service, had faced life and were glad, by some science, or light of knowledge they had, to which there had certainly been no parallel in the older world. Was some credible message from beyond "the flaming rampart of the world"—a message of hope, regarding the place of men's souls and their interest in the sum of things—already moulding anew their very bodies, and looks, and voices, now and here? At least, there was a cleansing and kindling flame at work in them, which seemed to make everything else Marius had ever known look comparatively vulgar and mean. There were the children, above all. . . . Children of the Catacombs, some but "a span long," with features not so much beautiful as heroic (that world of new refining sentiment having set its seal even on childhood), they retained certainly no stain or trace of anything subterranean this morning, in the alacrity of their worship—as ready as if they had been at play—stretching forth their hands, crying, chanting in a resonant voice, and with boldly upturned faces, *Christe Eleison.*[1]

A very great responsibility is laid upon those of us who are ministers to see that we foster in the whole conduct of worship, this "cleansing and kindling flame."

There is a prophetic side to our ministry in worship, and there is also a priestly. The priesthood of the ministry is a charge laid upon us by the "priesthood of all believers." We must beware of individualistic ministries where the minister thrusts his own devotional experiences and his own thoughts of God and of His ways upon his fellow-worshippers; where the hortatory element both in the sermon and in the rest of the

[1] *Marius the Epicurean*, II, pp. 130 ff.

service is unduly prominent.[1] It has often been noted that the Roman Church makes ample provision for the non-religious temperament; and for the religious temperament in its non-religious moods. "A simple mental cultus is too brainy for mere man."[2] To believe in "the priesthood of all believers" does not carry the assumption that believers are priests all the time; they have moments when they cannot utter; moments when religious assurance and certitude have deserted them, and they need to have these restored. There is a prophetic ministry of moral and spiritual awakening and arousing: there is also a priestly ministry of divinely-given sympathy, a being touched with the feeling of men's infirmities; men whose hearts are silent find them awakened and articulate through the prayers and the preaching and teaching of one who is called to be a priest among a priesthood of believers.

We must also be careful to note that the chief aim of our ministry in worship is not to produce an effect on our fellow-worshippers. No conception of worship has a more fatal effect on the authority of the Church. It is quite true that in a gathering for worship, which is to be distinguished from a chance crowd in this respect, something is really given to the individual as he worships, which comes through the fellowship; and without that fellowship he would not possess the gift. An ordinary crowd is capable of conduct which individual members of it would refuse to practise; in a gathering for worship, "there come to be, subtly and mysteriously blended in the group, traditions, memories, suggestions, the poetry of an ideal and the stored riches of a continued life."[3] That "addition to the individual" is not merely an effect produced by one individual on another; neither is it merely an effect

[1] Cf. Willard R. Sperry, *op. cit.*, Chapter XIII.
[2] F. von Hügel, cf. *The Mystical Element of Religion*, I, pp. 65 ff.
[3] R. S. Simpson, *Ideas in Corporate Worship*, p. 48.

produced by the Spirit of God, acting chiefly through the minister; we must beware of the idea that the reality and value of worship can be measured in terms of subjective impressions. We need to cherish the conviction of the *objectivity* of all true worship. I cannot forbear quoting another passage from the book already cited, written by one who had himself so rich an understanding of worship: "In worship . . . we must hold high in our hearts the conviction that something is going to happen. We are to meet with God, and God is to meet with us, and we are going to do something in the presence of God. We are going to bring to God an offering, the offering of our praise and of our prayer in the communion of all His saints in Heaven and on earth; and God is going to speak to us and have dealings with us, and receive our offering and give it a place in the service of His Kingdom."[1] The chief task of a "priest" is to get out of the way in the corporate act of worship; in a very real sense, to refuse to stand between his people and God. A great promise is attached to such an act of self-repression: "He that would be first among you, let him be your minister."

[1] R. S. Simpson, *Ideas in Corporate Worship*, pp. 53 f.; cf. also J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 290 ff.; G. J. Jordan, *A short Psychology of Religion*, pp. 117 ff.; R. H. Thouless, *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 159 f.; Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 302.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL CONTINUITY

The historical continuity of the Christian Society is not only an impressive but an authoritative fact. That we can trace a continuous Society right down the centuries; that men should thus be banded together through the centuries in one common cause, in which they have a deep and confident faith; that the institution, in all its varied forms, should still last—is itself a witness to an eternal truth at the heart of the Church. No secular organisation in its history has reached greater depths of moral infamy than the Christian Church; but it has always survived because of a "kindling and cleansing flame" fostered in the hearts of elect souls and obscure remnants of Christian folk who maintained the true apostolic succession.

I am not going to linger over the question of the so-called "Catholic" Church, and "the other little ships." The important thing is that these ships are all voyaging on the great sea. They all belong to one company; we know the port whence they sailed and whither they go; the wind of God fills all their sails. The question of seaworthiness does not arise at the moment, though there are many who think that the "Protestant"[1] vessel will have to transfer her pas-

[1] Both terms—"Catholic" and "Protestant"—have become degraded from their original meaning. "Catholic" originally expressed the idea that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there the power of Christ is present in fullness (καθ' ὅλου). I use the word "Protestant" in its original positive sense, which emphasised the idea of "*protestari*"; open profession or witness,

sengers. I do not intend to touch on the burning question of the seamanship of the officers, and their certificates; at least it is impressive that the Lord should still have on the seas such a powerful fleet. We cannot claim exclusive divine sanction for any particular form of worship or government. The Reformed Churches have never officially and authoritatively declared that the Roman Church is not part of the Church of Christ; at most, they have simply said that the Roman Communion is the "Church in error"; or the body of "adherents of the old religion."

The Church of Christ can as little afford to ignore its history as any other living institution. Every institution may justly be understood as an epitome of past history; and so long as it lives, it is the outward sign that, in the historic Church, men have a living experience of something in their human lives that is supremely valuable, whose age gives it far more than an antiquarian —an inherent value. The Church is the supreme treasure-house in history of such living experiences. Jesus Christ is, indeed, for us all the pioneer and object of our faith; he first brought that living experience of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world of men; men have never found it possible to make real and living to themselves that knowledge of God and to keep it so, by merely remembering the Christ of history. They have found that this glory of God is seen only in the face of Jesus Christ, alive and reigning, in the experience of men:

> That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Becomes my universe that feels and knows.

The Church of Christ is his own living body. This living experience of faith in God the Father through

based on an inward experience of faith; with no inherent negative force. Cf. H. M. Gwatkin, "Protestantism": *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*.

Jesus Christ, is no mere tension which individual human effort sustains. The existence of the Church as an institution is an indispensable succour for faith, in so far as it makes plain that the conception of life and its issues, deriving from Jesus Christ, has been confirmed in the experience of his disciples throughout the centuries.

A gap is increasingly felt to exist in religious experience to-day, between the Church of the first century A.D. and the Church to-day, with all its various interpretations of ministry, worship, and sacraments. Historical criticism has more firmly than ever established that Jesus of Nazareth was a man of his own time; this very knowledge, as we shall see more fully later, makes it increasingly difficult to understand how he can be as real in our own day as he was in his own. In some dim way, men believe that the Church throughout the centuries has lived by his Spirit, and has preserved for us the sacred tradition, making it possible for men to love him whom they have never seen. Yes, but how? The Church of Christ will never fully recover its spiritual authority to-day, until it becomes more able to give a consistent and satisfying account of its persistence throughout the centuries since the end of the story of the New Testament.

In giving this account of itself, the Church must ever keep in view what a believer with this gap in his consciousness really desires. He is not deeply interested in the growth of the outward institution and the origin of its ecclesiastical controversies and divisions. I assume that the man in question is one who feels that the ultimate source and organ of religious authority, after the true "Protestant" model, must be found in the individual's experience of God. Such an one, however, is often lonely; beset with questionings and perplexities which, now the science of psychology, now the sight of many who have no such experience and

do not seem to need it, now the historical criticism of the Scriptures, intensifies. No external and material guarantees regarding either ordination or the Scriptures will satisfy him, or will ever point him to satisfaction. Material guarantees are only of use, as it has been said, when the salvation that is sought is from material evils such as evil spirits or the fear of hell.

How then can the sense of the historical continuity of the Church help such an one ? Surely, by humanising its history ; by discovering the muster-roll of the saints in the ages that are past ; by teaching him to add names to the great spiritual genealogy of faith begun in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and ending with the words : " Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The real story of the Church was not written only by the men who made the great Creeds, but also by those who recited them ; not merely by the men who led the Reformation, but by all those whose hearts were set free from an intolerable spiritual tyranny. The continuous and unmistakable line of connexion between apostolic days and our own is what might be called the line of religious common consciousness. One great source of historical continuity and authority in the Church of Christ is found in our hymn-books, where we forget that the authors of these songs were often separated by many a deep ecclesiastical or theological division ; separated from us also by the long centuries. Yet we feel ourselves one with them in a common experience. The attempt to discover what Dr Leckie calls " one objective oracle of God "[1] is wrecked by a dispassionate study of the historical facts. Even if we admit the existence of more than one " oracle "—church, prophets, corporate conscience, Christ ; affirm that the voice of God speaks through them all and that in their consensus authority is found, we are still left

[1] J. H. Leckie, *Authority in Religion*, p. 73.

with the problem, " What is the unity that binds these different oracles into a consensus ? " Are we not thrown back again upon the believer's private judgment ?

This is not equivalent to isolating the individual conscience as the only authoritative channel of the knowledge of God. In order that the individual judgment may act with any confidence on the material which the history of the Church provides, we must believe that the same Spirit of God was at work in the impressions produced on generation after generation of his followers by the fact of Jesus Christ, as operates in the private judgment of men to-day. Neither the theology of St Paul nor of the great Creeds is merely " a reflection and exaggeration of human loyalty to an exceptionally pure human being " or " a mere nimbus encircling his head in their imagination." We may further add, again in words borrowed from R. H. Hutton, that no astronomer treats the corona of the sun as a merely subjective phenomenon with no basis in reality. We cannot explain the rainbow and at the same time dispense with the sun.[1] We cannot separate the historical Christ from the place he has occupied continuously in the faith of his people.

The real question of historical authority is the nature of the medium which the Spirit of God employed in producing such impressions. The organ of the Spirit is undoubtedly the individual experience, a discovery which is a confirmatory basis of certainty for the individual experience in subsequent ages ; we detect the sound of a voice like the voice that speaks in our own souls. Through what medium does this voice speak in history ? Is it the oracular voice of the Roman Church that speaks, say in the hymns of Faber, or in much earlier days, in those of Bernard of Clairvaux ? Or their own individual experience ? Do we not rejoice to sing their hymns, because they so evidently

[1] Cf. *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, pp. 201 ff.

speak out of that region of individual experience where we also crave the certainty of faith that can be kindled by another's faith? "One loving heart sets another on fire." Complete deference to ecclesiastical authority has never silenced the voice of individual experience.[1] "Pitiful arguments have in all ages been followed by admirable conversions." [2]

For these reasons, the Church can only recover its historical authority by humanising its history. So regarded, the history of the Church is what may be called an "introducing" authority; a means of leading out our own individual experience into an area with a wider horizon, where we recognise that God's revelation of Himself to man in Jesus Christ is "many-coloured"; and that the acceptance of it and the assurance of its truth in all its variety, has always rested on an individual act of faith. By this living chain of individual and personal experience coherence is given to the history of the Church, and of this chain we ourselves are the latest links. To concentrate upon the growth of office or government in the Church—however important that question may be to the ecclesiastical historian—is to miss the presence of the one continuing medium of the voice of God to the individual soul which is common to all the saints. Unanimity of dogmatic expression is not in itself an indication of ultimate truth. There may be a deviation in the interpretation which the thought of one age puts on a dogmatic formula, from the thought in the minds of those who originally framed it. *Quod semper, ubique et ab omnibus creditum est*, or, *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*, may verily become a mere Latin tag, which reduces the impressiveness of the *consensus fidelium* to its size; to a mere abstract scientific generalisation which appears to provide an external

[1] Cf. p. 14, *supra*.
[2] A. Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 313 (E. Tr.).

guarantee for individual faith, whose certainty is mathematical. It is obtained by reducing the individual to a number, and ignoring that prophetic experience which often makes a valuable heretic; by counting heads without also weighing them.[1]

As a story, the *consensus fidelium* undoubtedly awakens a response in the heart of the individual. The response may be the beginning of faith, like "the spectacle of them that believe" in a gathering for worship; a cloud of witnesses awakening him to a sense of the reality of religion, and giving a vision of the divine working in history.[2] On the other hand, the individual may take up no other attitude towards this consensus in history than an intellectual one, impressed by the beauty and sacrifice of the common faith. As a psychologist, he may see in it the common working of an instinct for projection; for the consensus, understood as an impressive fact of history, does not make us invulnerable to the attack of illusionist psychology. Even if impervious to that attack, he may yet behold something which only enables him to say that there must be a real foundation for such beliefs, but at the same time that he has no such insight:

> That with this bright believing band
> I have no claim to be,
> That faiths by which my comrades stand
> Seem phantasies to me
> And mirage mists their Shining Land,
> Is a drear destiny.[3]

The unanimity of the saints exercises no real religious authority on the individual, unless he himself has some

[1] See the remarkable passage in Newman's *Apologia* (pp. 116 f.), where he describes the effect on his mind of Augustine's words: *securus judicat orbis terrarum*: A bell ringing in a man's soul is hardly an infallible authority! "They were like the 'Turn again, Whittington' of the chime."

[2] Cf. D. M. Baillie, *Faith in God*, p. 110.

[3] T. Hardy, *The Impercipient*.

experimental knowledge of what it is they are unanimous about. It was certainly not the unanimity of others that was the origin and basis of faith for these saints themselves; religious experience itself includes faith as an integral part of it; faith is not awakened by numbers but is transmitted, as fire kindles fire. The power of Christianity is its inwardness; it makes an "ultra-democratic[1] appeal to the image of God in all men." This image of God in "all the saints" conveys a sense of authority to the modern individual out of the story of the Church.

The Church, from the beginning, was a society of living personalities, with Jesus in their midst as the object of their faith and the pioneer of their salvation. The freedom of the living personality must ever be of the essence of the Church in whatever directions the outward form of the society may develop; the Church as a living institution must recognise that it cannot continue to exercise authority, save only in so far as it encourages initiative of thought and belief among its individual members. The authority of Parliamentary government rests upon complete freedom of thought and speech, expressed in a constitutional way. Obedience to law is obtained only from those who recognise that these laws may be altered, repealed, or developed by themselves; acting, not as isolated individuals but as citizens of a community. There is an analogy here with the idea of the Church as an historical institution. The Church was made for man, not man for the Church. The nature of its authority as a guardian of the past is also the secret of its continued being, which ultimately depends on whether it seeks to encourage personal judgments of faith: "On this rock I will build my church." Its authority upon the individual is felt in the measure in which he recognises that in the membership of the society, he is himself the child of the ages, and is thereby delivered from the sheer indi-

[1] But produces a conscious aristocracy of "kings and priests unto God."

vidualism that would compel us to enter upon all religious questions *de novo*. His recognition of that authority is also the recognition that man's deepest religious needs unite him with the race; that the highest type of manhood has always asked those questions which the Gospel of Christ answers. In the language of biology, he recognises a survival-value in the recurrence, throughout the centuries, of these needs and questionings, and in the answers given. In thus keeping faith with the race he is encouraged to keep faith with God.[1]

[1] Cf. W. L. Sperry, *Reality in Worship*, pp. 30 f.

CHAPTER IV

CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL FAITH

In the beginnings of our religious life we accept our beliefs on an authority, which it would scarcely be fair to call external; those beliefs are mediated to us through lives and lips that have already won from us a living and personal trust; won from us as parts of a certain social organism, the Church into which we were born. Our religious life is cradled in the religious society and largely by a process of suggestion and assimilation our beliefs have been formed. This acceptance on authority at the first, is only a symptom of the undoubted fact that there is no such thing as an isolated individual; our personality, just because it is a personality and ever in process of becoming one in this "vale of soul-making," lays hold, by all sorts of delicate filaments and tentacles, of the social system whereof it is an integral part. Our thoughts, imaginations, affections, and desires are as dependent for their life on the social system we inherit, as a tree is on the kind of soil in which it is planted. It is pre-eminently so in the religious life; religion all through is much more than a private affair. Even the doctrine of "the inner light," with all the truth that it contains and all the meekness of its appeal by reason of its rejection of outward forms, is yet nourished in an atmosphere of organised corporate silence. "Would'st thou enjoy at once solitude and society; would'st thou possess the depth of thine own spirit in stillness, without being shut out from the consolatory faces of thy species; would'st thou be alone, and yet accompanied; solitary,

yet not desolate; singular, yet not without some to keep thee in countenance; a unit in aggregate; a simple in composite—come with me into a Quakers' Meeting. . . . For a man to refrain even from good words, and to hold his peace, it is commendable; but for a multitude, it is a great mastery."[1]

Nor is it true to say that all our religious experience if it is to be real, must be reasoned through. "The questions which we ask are really the questions of specialists, of those whose attention is naturally directed only to certain phases of common experience."[2] At the same time, we must remember that all modern knowledge is based on the authority of the individual mind. Even if we are compelled to accept scientific conclusions on the word of the scientists, this acceptance is based on the individual belief that, had we opportunity to test and explore as they, we should come to the same conclusion. Even in Science itself, it is on these terms that specialist accepts the results of specialist. Bernard Shaw's ironic words are to the point: "The ablest and most independent thinkers are content to understand their own special department. In other departments, they will unhesitatingly ask for and accept the instructions of a policeman, or the advice of a tailor without demanding or desiring explanations."[3]

We need, however, to ask ourselves with some care, what is really meant by the authority of the corporate faith, the common consciousness of the Church. Dr Leckie, in his most valuable book,[4] develops the argument that, as we are relatively dependent on the light given to our consciences by the revelation conveyed by the aristocrats of the spiritual life—the prophetic geniuses, so must we also be indebted to the voice of the Church in so far as it expresses the

[1] C. Lamb, *The Essays of Elia*: "A Quaker's Meeting."
[2] Cf. K. Edwards, *Religious Experience*, p. 154.
[3] Preface to *St Joan*, xlviii.
[4] *Authority in Religion.*

result of universal Christian experience. What is really meant by "universal Christian experience"? He goes on to say "that the religious environment in which we find ourselves is *the product of consciousness;* it is the common element in the experience of believers; it is, in the truth of it, Christ speaking to us through the conscience of the Christian ages."[1] Again: "Its (the Church's) *peculiar* weight lies in its expression of the general faith and thought of average Christian people, and we may confidently affirm that it is in every age the great organ and interpreter, within Christendom of the common religious life." Subsequently, he quotes Father Tyrell to the effect that "one's belief in the Church as the organ of religion is to some extent one's belief in the laws of collective psychology, which are the laws of nature, which are the laws of God."[2]

Now it is precisely in the light of "collective psychology" that such statements demand most careful re-examination. We have in this corporate consciousness of the Church an instance of the phenomenon of the group-mind, which modern psychology has set itself to analyse, and to some purpose. Many psychologists trace religious feeling to the "herd-instinct" as its principal source; the "herd"[3] provides an object on which the individual may rest as he reaches out towards something greater and more powerful than himself—"some encompassing being in whom his perplexities may find a solution and his longings peace." The idea of God is regarded as a social

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 135 f.

[3] The psychology of the "herd" must, of course, be distinguished from the psychology of the crowd. The herd is not brought into being by accidental forces, but is the creation of elemental forces and social instincts. Its members may be possessed by real spiritual loyalties. Its analogy with the corporate Church need not be offensive. The "group" is just a fully organized "herd."

expedient, calculated to vitalise the pursuit of certain ideals necessary to the coherence of the society.

We must be careful, in our estimate of corporate faith, that we know how to use and understand "the laws of collective psychology." Dr Thouless's chapter on "The Herd-Instinct" in his *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, is an oasis in the desert of the literature dealing with religion and the herd-instinct. He accepts freely the part which the herd-instinct and the group-mind play in individual experience of religion; but he also points out that another powerful instinct is at work in religious development; namely, the instinct to suppress and antagonise the herd-instinct, if religious life is to reach its full intensity. The extreme instance is the experience of the mystic, and of the monk in his cell. Every intense religious experience craves for moments of withdrawal from the voices and the haunts of men, even of fellow-Christians. Instinctively it is recognised that man's behaviour and emotional reactions in the group are different from those of his solitary life. That difference rests upon a real distinction. At the same time, the laws that govern the interaction of men in the group "are ultimately determined by the passions and struggles of individual men." In other words, all so-called group-thinking may be stated in terms of individual experience. Mass-suggestion, in the herd or in the crowd, is due simply to the greater degree of individual suggestibility produced by the presence of others. Suggestibility is part of the gift of the creative spirit; suggestibility is not mere passivity, but is itself creative and may be disruptive. It is a state of mind which may serve the interests of religion itself, but we must keep ourselves free to criticise it.

It seems to me that to argue, as Dr Leckie does, that "the voice of God speaking through the common conscience of the religious organism" is necessarily more authoritative and majestic than individual experience

itself, is to fall into the mistake of regarding the group-mind as a collective consciousness, which must arrive more nearly at the truth just because it is collective.[1] The convictions of a solitary thinker may be weighty, but the conviction does not become more so, because it is shared by many thinkers, past or present. It may be held by many because it is true; it may be held by many because one as a part of the many is more suggestible than the solitary individual; or it may be the sanctification of blind custom.[2]

I would not underestimate the value of the common consciousness as a means; but I do insist that it is not to be regarded as in itself an end. We may come to regard the common consciousness of the Church as an independent entity; an external safeguard against the vagaries and dangers of independent and individual thinking. As a matter of fact, ecclesiastical tradition will always take care of itself, and need not be "hypostatised."[3] Everything ultimately depends on the attitude towards the group-mind held by the *ecclesia docens*. The group-mind, with its heightening of individual suggestibility is not the Church, but an instrument in its hands. If the teaching Church be represented, say by an evangelical preacher of a certain type, the authority of his words may convey evangelical truth. It may also convey a good deal of other traditional matter which he himself has been taught to associate with it: for example, a forensic doctrine of the Atonement; a docetic view of Christ's person; a literalistic method of interpreting the Scriptures. The herd-instinct must not be so manipulated as to lead the individual to identify certain forms of thought with the content of the Evangelical faith.[4]

Certain types of theological thinking and outlook,

[1] Cf. the opening paragraph of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.
[2] Cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, I, p. 12.
[3] Harnack, *Ibid.*, I, p. 10.
[4] Cf. Selbie, *Psychology of Religion*, p. 158.

certain institutional forms, become identified in actual experience with certain moral and spiritual results. To adapt an utterance of Von Hügel's, the Invisible is declared to be conterminous and identical with the Visible. The visible and sensible chokes the invisible and spiritual and stifles the apprehension of it, as all mass-suggestion tends to do. The Church may become a corporation, and solicitous chiefly for the preservation of the institution and its doctrines. Where the institutional idea of the Church is highly developed, as in modern "Catholicism," there arises a deep-rooted distrust of the validity and authority of individual religious experience. In many quarters, the last thing that is wanted is freedom of thought. Individual experience is admitted to be real and necessary; but apart from a conscious relation to the group-mind, the corporate form and teaching of the Church, it must, in the words of one writer, be regarded as "unconsciously *parasitic*" (the italics are mine) "upon the larger and deeper stream of religious and spiritual inspiration which is mediated by the corporate and institutional life of the Church."[1] "Parasitic" is a somewhat offensive word to apply to that individual experience which is quite aware of all it owes to tradition and the corporate life of the Church, and reverences it highly. This is not the behaviour of the "parasite." It might not be unjust to describe some aspects of Martineau's thoughts about tradition as "parasitic"; he does behave towards Christian tradition, in his attempt to "separate the divine from the human in the origin of religion, like a child who picks out everything in the conduct of its parents that it might safely disregard."[2] Yet in utterances like the one quoted from Dr Rawlinson, the corporate and institutional life of the Church is thought of as an end in itself; at the most there is conceded to the individual experience merely a certain critical

[1] A. J. Rawlinson, *Authority and Freedom*, p. 137.

[2] R. H. Hutton, *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, p. 204.

function. The ultimacy of the consensus of Christian minds is put before the ultimacy of private judgment; it is forgotten that individual experience itself created and made necessary the fellowship and the outward forms of corporate religious life. The function of individual experience is not merely critical; it is much more than merely a useful compensation balance against legalism: its function is at all times creative and sometimes revolutionary. The group-mind has no existence at all, except in so far as it obeys the psychological movements of the individual mind.

The position that the corporate consciousness of the Church, just because it is corporate, widespread, and continuous with tradition ought therefore in itself to exercise authority on individual faith, needs revision in the light of psychology. At the best, this corporate consciousness is only a powerful succour and source of individual experience. This unexamined acceptance of the corporate mind of the Church both conceals its true authoritative significance, and reveals the true source of that non-rational attitude towards the Church which reaches its climax in the doctrine of Papal or Scriptural Infallibility. Every demand for external material guarantees of the faith—whether these are sought in a conception of the ministry, in the sacrosanct majority, in the idolising of the continuity of the Church and of its creeds, in a Book,—arises out of the craving of the natural man for infallibilities in religion.

External conceptions of ecclesiastical authority are not entirely due to priestly tyranny; the laity have probably had far more to do with the development of the idea of the "Catholic" Church than the clergy. "Protestantism" does not in itself provide an escape from ecclesiastical domination. As Sohm says, "the natural man is a born Catholic,"[1] and victory over the "natural man" is the task of all true religion. To

[1] See the impressive passage in *Outlines of Church History*, by R. Sohm (E. Tr.), pp. 34 ff.

certain types of mind, matters of religion are still too important to be the subject of individual investigation and reflection. That man should ever be permitted, even though not without Divine guidance, to think of God in his own image is regarded as opening the door to all kinds of scepticism and uncertainty; instead of being, as it is, the only condition under which personal certainty of God is possible, and the Incarnation intelligible. External ecclesiastical authority is not imposed by priests on a guileless laity. The laity create the authoritative priests and the ecclesiastical church order.[1] It was ultimately the layman, and not the cleric, who encouraged the baneful alteration in the conception of the word "Catholic." It meant originally, the Church in its completeness (*καθ' ὅλου*), where two or three are gathered together, having full Christian power, because Christ is in the midst. Then it came to mean an assembly where the one Bishop was present as Christ's official representative. He came to be so regarded by the two or three or more, because Christ had so often been made real to them through him, both in word and life; perhaps especially because his hands had so often handled the sacred sacramental symbols before their eyes. The entire ceremonial process of sacramental worship, charged with a symbolic significance that expressed the great single leading motive of the Christian faith, was centred in the actions of one visible person; his hands would, to the simple worshipper, seem to be endowed with some mysterious power. It is precisely the same kind of psychological process of association that made possible both the idea of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, and the *charisma veritatis* of the bishop. It is the psychology of the "natural man." Association is an instrument of thought, but is not intended to supersede and make it unnecessary.

It must not, however, be forgotten that a motive

[1] Cf. Oman, *The Church and the Divine Order*, p. 111 n.

power much stronger than association of ideas, was also at work in the development of the idea of a " Catholic " ministry. Christianity is essentially an historical religion. Amid the various speculative conceits and phantasies of Gnosticism in the second century, which, if unchecked, would have resolved Christianity into a philosophical system, the average Christian mind demanded some actual historical contact with Jesus Christ. This could only be obtained from those who as apostles were his companions, or from those who were their disciples. The desire for the assurance of history was both laudable and necessary. In a time of great religious perplexity it was laid down that office-bearers in the various communities, who had been taught at least by " apostolic men ", as Irenæus calls the disciples of apostles, should be the judges of wholesome Christian teaching. Such an extremely natural and very timely expedient for the preservation of the Church in a time of intellectual confusion, has been elevated into " the gigantic figment " of an Apostolic Succession.[1]

The ideas of the " Catholic " Church, as well as of the inerrant Book, are very largely the instinctive creation of the herd-instinct in religion. They present the spectacle of religious humanity running for cover to escape from the burden and responsibility of its own freedom ; taking refuge in a Church which, out of a compassion arising from a weak view of human nature, gives it what it seeks—an external security of doctrine and of sacrament for its inward peace. The Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's novel[2] reproaches Jesus Christ because he gave men a freedom—" freedom to choose between good and evil "—which they were either unable to use or might use only at the cost of acute suffering to themselves ; the Church corrected him and took on itself the burden of decision and thought for

[1] T. M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, pp. 224 f.

[2] *The Brothers Karamazof*, V, Chapter v.

men; Dostoevsky also emphasises that men have clamoured for the Church so to do. In this great chapter, not without a certain cynical exaggeration, the ecclesiastical conception of authority is nakedly exposed. The exposure still has relevance to the temper that may be found in every Church; we get the kind of Church that we deserve, in our natural and faithless distrust of our own individual experience; wherever the conviction is absent that truth is not established because it works, but only because it is true.

CHAPTER V

CREEDS AND THE PROBLEM OF REVISION

1. *The Necessity of a Creed*

It is certain that the person of Jesus Christ, in the experience of faith, was the origin of the Christian Society. It is equally certain that doctrine or interpretation of that experience was inevitable, both for the individual and for the Church. Faith always thinks, and thinks fearlessly: "Mighty religion and mighty strokes of speculation have always gone together." The Christology of Paul was inevitable for one who had Paul's experience of God in Christ. Rational thinking is a necessary operation of Christian religious experience. Although, with Newman, we must admit that "the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it,"[1] yet, on the other hand, a logical or reasonable expression of faith is an essential part of the whole movement, and makes for stability and decision.

Does the authority of the Church extend to the theology and the Creeds which are the expression of its faith? Dogma may be defined as a crystallisation, officially accepted by the Church, of those interpretations of Christian experience which are its "doctrines." On the other hand, dogma may also be regarded, in its origin, as preceding doctrine. The living power of dogma is derived from the spontaneous utterance of a soul, in which the flame of absolute faith or trust in God through Christ has been kindled; historically, the beginnings of dogma and the formal

[1] *Apologia*, p. 169.

confession, as a crystallised expression of the Church's faith, are found in the desire to put into the mouths of converts, what was already in their hearts regarding Jesus Christ; to "catechise" them before baptism and admission to the Church. The earliest Creed had in it "the note of triumphal assurance, carrying the hearts of all its adherents with it in a gush of emotion";[1] a note and an emotion, which, if ever they are absent in the recital of a Creed, render it dead and inoperative. In this sense, it is true to say that the authority of the Church is "primarily religious and secondarily dogmatic."[2] Its dogmatic expression must be the wick for the "cleansing and kindling flame"; and it must always recognise not only that the flame is more important than the wick, but also that no illuminating flame is possible without a wick.

The Church was undoubtedly compelled, in the deepest religious interest, to concern itself with its Creed at an earlier date than with its constitution.[3] Pagan philosophies were active, and converts entered the Church, carrying with them many pre-Christian and pagan ideas. Naturally they would attempt to combine the new and the old. The Church had to be watchful and jealous for the supreme place of Jesus in Christian experience, and was compelled to state and define the Christian facts. We realise the marvellous spiritual insight that guided the Church in selecting and isolating just these articles of faith which enter into the formation of the great Creeds. The supreme guiding motive was to conserve at once the unique sonship of Jesus and his historical reality—both of palmary importance for personal religion. Historical fact is emphasised in the Apostles' Creed in a remarkable way. Jesus was really born, and was really crucified; the emphasis on these historical facts is meant implicitly

[1] W. A. Curtis, *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, III, p. 832.
[2] J. H. Leckie, *Authority in Religion*, pp. 153 ff.
[3] Cf. J. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 192 f

to reject the docetic views of those to whom it was uncongenial and even irreverent to believe that a Divine Being could ever have been a helpless babe, or could ever have suffered pain and been submitted to shame; the actual name of the mother of Jesus is mentioned, and the crucifixion is dated—"suffered under Pontius Pilate."

It may also be pointed out that the theological language of the great Creeds is actuated more by religious and moral motives than by a purely intellectual one. To say that Jesus is consubstantial with God is really to say—no doubt in terms of a Greek philosophy that demanded a semi-physical contact with the Divine in order to salvation—that in him we are in living touch with God. The moral motive is equally strong; sin is a moral condition which separates from God, and the Church believes in the forgiveness of sins; the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is no mere curious speculation, but has its place in the Apostles' Creed from reverence for our life here, from opposition to Gnostic ideas of an evil element in the flesh, and from a sense of responsibility for deeds done in the body as against a mystical antinomianism. Even "materialistic" conceptions of the sacraments have at the root of them a profound moral motive, and are deeply related to a moral insistence,—again as against Gnostic and antinomian ideas,—that body needs sanctifying as well as soul. If the actual form of the Creeds is the work of "experts,"[1] it cannot be said that the religious and moral needs of the Christian democracy did not produce them.

As regards the authority of the Creeds, the Church certainly has an obligation to declare the doctrines for which it stands; to condemn errors that would obscure or destroy the supreme place of Jesus Christ in men's experience; and to settle the standard of belief required of its ministers. The dogmatic authority of the

[1] But cf. J. H. Leckie, *Authority*, p. 155.

Church does not extend so far as to impose actual dogmatic utterances on men's minds; but it must always "create and foster the impulse towards dogmatic expression." The Church cannot rest content with a sharp distinction between metaphysical and religious knowledge; to adapt Mr Wells's language, it cannot be content with heart loyalty to an Invisible King, Jesus Christ, and at the same time suggest ignorance of the ways and character of a Veiled Being, God, who seems to manage, mismanage, or blindly direct the affairs of the universe;[1] the Church must create and foster the conviction that Jesus Christ, in the experience of men, is essentially related to God.

The Church must always be the Interpreter's House. "Dogmatism," says Höffding, "is the index to the book of life, not the book itself, and religion sometimes thinks she is fighting for life, when she is really only fighting for the preservation of the index."[2] The illustration may indeed suggest that a dogma, like an index, is only a means of economising thought. It is much more. It is true that dogmas are symbols, and can only suggest the truth; true, also, that in the making of Creeds, association of ideas and blind custom, as well as ecclesiastical and political interests have asserted themselves. There is, however, a real necessity for religion to express itself in a form of words, even if only to enable the members of the religious society to communicate with one another, and in order that their common worship of God may be rational, "a reasonable service." "Take with you words," says the ancient prophet, in his antagonism to barren ritual. This desire for communication with the other members of the religious society is an instinct, and part of the same general instinct that is at work in the growth of all language. All social systems are kept together by what it is no disparagement to call "the blind force of

[1] Cf. W. R. Sperry, *Reality in Worship*, pp. 127 f.
[2] H. Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 282.

instinctive actions, and of instinctive emotions clustered round habits and prejudices."[1] Custom has undoubtedly gone to the making of Creeds, as well as conscious reflection. The Church is not a purely voluntary organisation, but the creation of the Spirit. The force of use and wont is undoubtedly one without which no nation or society could continue to hold together; the Spirit of God creates and makes use of this force, whose existence is not necessarily a denial of the Divine initiative and guidance.

2. *The Duty of Creed Revision*

The great Creeds represent theoretic interpretation of a common experience. The demand for Creed revision to-day, however, is often made in forgetfulness of the fact that Creeds did not come into being in response to a purely intellectual necessity. In one sense it would be true to say that the intellectual background of the third or fourth centuries, which appears in the great Creeds, is religiously as irrelevant as the intellectual background of the New Testament. In neither case is the background more than the inevitable setting for fundamental religious ideas; a particular age cannot express its religious ideas intelligibly save in its own intellectual forms. The Creeds, however, are not the fruit, as we have already seen, merely of intellectual activity under the influence of an elemental spiritual impulse. They are therefore not to be regarded as always due for alteration, whenever the thought of a more intellectually enlightened age seems to demand it. The Creeds are not fully described when we say that they are composed of certain theological propositions; nor were they ever meant to be regarded as true, in the sense that they are actual mirrors of ultimate reality.

[1] A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism*, p. 81.

Creeds are symbols.[1] The flag of one's country is a patriotic symbol. A piece of cloth with certain marks upon it, waving in the wind, is actually as unlike an empire as anything could well be; but it has imperial significance for the individual's patriotic feeling. A word, spoken or written, has no positive resemblance to the thought for which it stands. It is a symbol. The printed page and the poem are different things. A flag does not differ more from an empire, a printed page from a song sung out of a poet's heart, than the intellectual forms and imagery of a Creed differ from God, the Ultimate Reality. What makes it possible for a flag to represent an empire, is that we and our ancestors have invested the flag with our own emotions and ideas; we store them up in the flag, and the sight of it sets them free again within us. The process has been aptly likened to the charging of a battery, which may subsequently charge back.[2] The battery itself, as a mechanism, is a cumulative creation of scientific thought, and the thought was directed by the purpose the battery was intended to serve, namely the storing of the electric charge. The purpose expressed in the battery is not to call attention to the various parts out of which it is made, but to store up and render available for use the electric current. To the formation of a Creed much accumulated intellectual effort has gone, the accumulated effort of generations. The effort has been directed both consciously and unconsciously, to the preservation and storing of certain religious values. Its intention, however, is not to present a series of logical propositions, but to communicate the faith of which it is a symbol; to reproduce in us the faith and experience of the community, which have brought it

[1] "Symbol" as applied to a Creed has, in modern usage, a different sense from the ancient usage as a "pass-word" (*symbolum*), which admits into the Church. Cf. S. H. Mellone, *The Price of Progress*, pp. 145 ff.; W. Sanday, *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, pp. 221 ff.

[2] J. Huxley, *Essays*, p. 281.

into being. Symbolic religious forms may be inferior to scientific arguments in logical clearness, but far surpass them in power and reach. Belief in scientific notions divides men; symbols unite them into a community. The makers of the Creeds—even granting that certain political and ecclesiastical interests had their influence—kept in view the fact that the majority of men are incapable of sustained thinking. A continual demand for sustained thinking would be hostile to religious conviction; no man's single experience can include or reproduce the whole of all possible experience of God. Creeds are not the only symbols in religion; rites and ceremonies are also symbols: the whole cult is symbolic, providing a form of action which men can perform together with mutual strengthening and deepening of faith. In the whole of religious worship, in so far as we communicate with each other's minds, we are not occupied in telling one another what each of us, as individuals, knows already. The desire to communicate with one another in common worship, to give what the other has not or to receive what the other has to give, is unfulfilled unless we are conscious of being in the presence of God, Who both gives the desire and fulfils it. A Creed sums up the historic experience of the religious society, which includes the dead as well as the living; we believe in the communion of saints. The liturgical use of a Creed is meant to be both a sign of the religious subordination of the individual to and his dependence upon a society, and of his independence and freedom. Freedom of religious belief is not an individualistic but a social freedom. The whole of worship is meant to carry out the functions of a body in relation to the soul of which it is the teleological expression. Speech, sight, and sound are employed in worship; not only to convey our religious ideas to one another, but actually and chiefly to unite men in the presence of God and to enable them to realise His presence. Thus individual experiences

arise for us in worship ; common worship creates them by its symbolism.

In our desire to revise the Creed of a Church, the leading motive must not be in order to make it easier for the intellectually enlightened to make use of it.

> The trained mind outs the upright soul,
> As Jesus said the trained mind might ;
> Being wiser than the Sons of Light ;
> But trained men's minds are spread so thin,
> They let all kinds of darkness in,
> Whatever light man finds they doubt it,
> They love not light, but talk about it.[1]

The real danger in religious thought, is in the first place, lest the articles of a Creed be taken for what they are not, namely scientific knowledge. To seek to alter the words " sunrise " and " sunset " in our common speech, on grounds of intellectual honesty, would be theoretically correct, but would utterly disorganise our social relationships. The words have a symbolic value ; the substitution of others more true to the Copernican position would lay upon most people an intellectual effort of which they are incapable, which would also seriously hinder ordinary social activity. After all, the words " sunrise " and " sunset " are true *relatively ;* they are descriptive of the world our own thought has builded ; man to-day still occupies the same relative position to the heavenly bodies as he always did. This is to be distinguished from the kind of plea for the permanence of dogmas which Catholicism employs ; namely, that none but the expert has a right to concern himself with them : it is a plea that the need for intellectual advance is not the chief motive in Creed revision. Theology must always be susceptible to the spirit of the age, and the susceptibility may ultimately lead to creedal changes. But a Creed is not necessarily in itself so directly susceptible ; it symbolises truths

[1] John Masefield, *The Everlasting Mercy.*

that are true in every age and, being a Symbol, is raised above the ebb and flow of contemporary opinion.

I would suggest that the modern urge towards Creed revision is the result of at least three factors.

1. One essential question in Creed revision, is whether we have to-day ceased to occupy the same relative position to the primary fact of the Christian faith as our fathers occupied—the fact of Christ. The Apostles' Creed begins with a statement of belief in God the Father, and is followed by a statement of belief in Jesus Christ. That is not the order in which our experience moves to-day. Our experience is first Christocentric, and then Theocentric; it is through Jesus Christ that we come to the knowledge of the Father. This is not to say that *all* we know of God has come to us through Jesus Christ; but all our knowledge of God that awakens Christian faith and worship has so come. Neither does it mean that the first article of a modern Creed must be an article, not about God, but about Jesus Christ. The Apostles' Creed, as well as the Nicene, are so constructed as to be Theocentric; so as to emphasise that Jesus Christ is one in nature with God, that Jesus is God. "Conceived by the Holy Ghost," "His only Son," "sitteth on the right hand of God the Father," are utterances relative to the point of view of those who are in the habit of interpreting the person of Christ in the light of their conception of God. To-day the relative position has changed; religious thought interprets God in the light of our knowledge of Jesus Christ. This change of relative position is really a far more important incentive towards revision than the fact that, in the great Creeds, heaven is regarded as above us, and the abode of the dead beneath our feet. This change is brought about by an increase and deepening of interest in the life and teaching of Jesus; is the fruit of a profound religious motive; and is the

chief reason why the Apostles' Creed, or the Nicene Creed, are imperfect symbols of religious faith to-day. The desire for creedal restatement proceeds from a disturbance at the very heart of the Church's life, a change in our relative position. Such a disturbance is of God, and must be reckoned with. Creed revision must proceed from a religious motive, not a desire to make it easier for intellectuals to share in common worship. The Church must never behave as though, in confessing her faith, she stands with the dagger of science pointed at her breast.

Creed revision is overdue and the Church must ever claim freedom and authority to revise; but we must never give the impression that our symbols are subject to frequent change. Only when symbols cease to symbolise should they be altered. To alter a Church's liturgical symbol is the same serious kind of step as to alter the flag of a country. Alteration of a flag presupposes certain momentous and elemental political changes. Reverence for a symbol is a very important unifying power within the society. On the other hand, the valuation of symbols is not only a conservative, but also a disruptive power. A religious symbol, like a political one, not only preserves the commonweal, but is intended to express the individual standpoint. In the most suggestive closing chapter of Dr A. N. Whitehead's book on *Symbolism*, although he does not refer directly to religious symbols, much of what he says is directly applicable. By the doctrine of symbolism, we are able to repel the attack, to quote his own words, of "the theoretic intellect, enthusiastic for exact truth, which regards all symbols as make-believe."[1] At the same time, symbols that have ceased to symbolise for the individual experience, arouse that experience as a disruptive force.

"I am less sensitive," wrote Sanday, "than some of my friends, and less sensitive than I used to be myself,

[1] *Symbolism*, p. 71.

about such a matter as the recitation of the so-called Athanasian Creed. It is not really *I* who say it, but the Church which says it. . . . I repeat it, not as an individual, but as a member of the Church. I do not feel that I am responsible for it; what I am responsible for is the desire to enter into the mind of the Church. I tacitly correct the defects of expression, because I believe that the Church would correct them if it could, but it cannot. For the Creed as it stands the Church is responsible, and not I."[1] To suggest that a worshipper, while reciting a Creed—of course the Athanasian Creed is an extreme instance, but the suggestion applies to the others also—should at once tacitly correct defects, and at the same time be conscious that the Church is aware of these and yet can do nothing, is also surely to admit that the symbol has lost much of its power to symbolise; is therefore ripe for alteration, and that the Church is bound to obey the felt disturbance at its very heart.

2. The second factor in Creed revision is that any new creedal form must be inclusive, not exclusive in its tendency. It must be, as in the older days, a formula of welcome, and therefore intelligible to those for whom the older theological phrases have largely lost their meaning. A Creed must avoid all appearance of merely dictating theological forms of expression to Christian experience. The Apostles' Creed originally avoided this dictation by its close adherence to the classical words of Scripture and to its facts. It was afterwards that the Creed came to be used as a test of orthodoxy. I do not necessarily mean that the ancient words and phrases must be totally excluded, but that their original significance for actual life should be re-emphasised. Something much deeper and nobler than "pugnacious party spirit," as Dr Whitehead calls it, has made theologians in all ages "unwilling to disengage

[1] *Christologies*, p. 236.

their spiritual message from the associations of a particular imagery."[1] It was more than a purely theological interest that led the Council of Nicea to insist that Christ is not merely like God, but that He *is* God; the statement means not merely that God is the source of love, but that God *is* Love. To many to-day, doctrines, assertions about the person of Christ, as indicating the nature and purpose of God, seem just the fossilised relics of long-forgotten and barren logomachies. As against this, we have to emphasise to-day, that belief in the nature of God is of momentous importance for determining the quality of human life. The Fundamentalist has given good ground for the belief that Creeds are meant to exclude, by the position, "If you cannot subscribe to our Creed, get out"; the Athanasian position is really infinitely nobler, much healthier and deeper, much more inclusive: "which faith, except a man do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly";[2] it calls men to a belief in God revealed in Jesus Christ as completely indispensable and urgently necessary for the great business of living. "He shall perish everlastingly" is undoubtedly a damnatory clause, but is to be understood in terms of the thought of an age which expressed the eternal distinction between right and wrong in terms of heaven and hell. Those who so thought were at least concerned for the quality of life which is produced by leaving God and eternal moral distinctions out of it. To regard a creedal form of words merely as essential for the preservation of the society, as the Fundamentalist does, is a timid "running for cover": a much more elevated and heroic position is to regard the symbol as an expressive means of enriching our whole conception of life. Without such absolute faith in God and in the love of Christ as the love of God, our love ceases to be steadfast and to

[1] *Science and the Modern World*, p. 235.

[2] Cf. J. Baillie, *Hibbert Journal*, January 1926, p. 238.

endure; loses that outreaching power of imagination which enables men to grasp and make real to themselves the lives and needs of others; loses driving power, and becomes a series of brief, disconnected ventures of kindliness. The Fourth Evangelist really utters the Athanasian position, when he says: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." For a generation to lose faith in God, is to receive the seeds of death into its social soil, and ultimately, as history shows, to perish.

3. The third determining factor in Creed revision is the social emphasis of the Christian faith in our own day. This is really an expansion of the second factor. We have already said that the demand for an alteration in our symbols is due to a change in the position which Jesus Christ has come to occupy relatively to our minds. That change of position involves necessarily that in the new symbol there must be a form of words, fitted to link up our sense of the moral authority of Jesus with our belief in God. Jesus Christ has moral authority in the hearts of thousands to-day, yet who cannot subscribe to the orthodox utterances regarding his person. Our Creed must meet them so far as to symbolise for us the faith *that God is as good as Jesus Christ*. The deepening ethical and social emphasis of to-day is the result of a new desire to apply the teaching of Jesus in our complex modern world. The moral teaching of Jesus occupies a unique place in every earnest mind. Is the difficulty in applying that teaching simply due to the resistance of human sin? Or to a belief that the whole nature of things makes it impossible to assent to the teaching of Jesus Christ? Jesus did not think so.[1] Any conflict between the ethics of Nature and his own ethic did not seem to perplex him. Our new symbol of faith must utter for us the conviction that God Himself came to us in Jesus Christ, and that, in his life, death,

[1] Cf. pp. 73 ff. of the present book.

and resurrection, God is known as One who bears evil and suffering and pain; took them to Himself; overcame them; and gives power to overcome.

This demand that a wider moral emphasis should be expressed in the symbols of our faith must be reckoned with. This emphasis must be capable of being expressed in terms of religious experience. The extension and deepening of the social conscience to-day has raised questions about the government and purpose of the universe, which must find creedal expression. Very many outside the Churches altogether, are actuated by a passion for purity and righteousness; love their neighbours as themselves; love truth and beauty; make great personal sacrifices for the sake of their needier brethren: but they see no connexion between these activities and the faith and Creeds of the Church. Belief in God is thought of as an extra. The supreme place given to Jesus Christ in the great Creeds is regarded as having no vital connexion with obedience to the modern social conscience.

The conception that Creeds are irrelevant to the social message and needs of the day is really due to a defective interpretation of Church history, especially of the history of the primitive and subapostolic church. To the earliest Christians, the community of believers was the field within which it was possible to put into practice the spirit and teaching of Jesus. The social experiment recorded in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles[1] is the earliest recorded example. The deception of Ananias and Sapphira, whatever we make of the actual story, is described in an atmosphere of stern moral as well as religious emphasis. They "lied to the Holy Ghost" in ignoring the ethical purity of Christian conduct. When we seek to interpret the term "fellowship" (*κοινωνία*), in the New Testament, we come upon an instructive ambiguity. It may mean either the fellowship of believers with one

[1] Acts iv. 32 ff.

another or the believer's fellowship with God.[1] Within that fellowship, the Christian is expected to exercise the charity, the forgiveness of injury, and the helpful consideration of others' needs which he has learned from the Master. Nor was the ethical impression made by Christian lives confined to their own circle. There is a familiar passage in the *Epistle to Diognetus* which describes the kind of impact made by the Christian Church of the middle of the second century upon the pagan world. While the Christians claimed to be members of a supernatural society, which was the outpost of a heavenly community or kingdom of God—"a colony of heaven,"—yet it was the manner of their discharge of the duties of earthly citizenship that left the deepest mark on the pagan mind and conscience. I quote from Lightfoot's translation :

> Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality, or in speech, or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life. Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence or study of ingenious men, nor are they masters of any human dogma as some are. But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvellous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners ; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like other men and they beget children ; but they do not cast away their offspring. . . . Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. . . . They are put to death, and yet they are endued with life. . . . They

[1] Cf. Acts ii. 42 and 1 Cor. i. 9 ; also 1 John i. 3, where both meanings are combined ; cf. E. F. Scott, *The Gospel and its Tributaries*, p. 92.

> are evil-spoken of, and yet they are vindicated. . . . They are reviled and they bless; they are insulted and they respect.[1]

The whole passage should be read, if only for the moral exultation that is conveyed by its very rhythm. The description closes with the words: "What the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world."

The reproach is often levelled at the Church to-day that the message of Jesus Christ was a social message, and that the growth of the institutional Church has overlaid it or even deliberately concealed it. It is also said that we are recovering the social message, in spite of the Church. It is true that the official Church has often been on the wrong side in matters of social progress. The reason has often been sheer traditionalism, actuated by a fear of the very social conscience which the message of the Church has itself created, and faithless ignorance of its own history.[1] Our generation must be recalled to the truth that the place given to Jesus Christ in our faith, inevitably determines the motive and the value of all social service which his teaching inspires; the river cannot rise higher than its source. In Apostolic days, it was not in the first place even the teaching and example of Jesus that produced the social revolution that followed the Apostolic preaching. It was the Church's faith regarding him and the unique place he occupied in its worship, as the Son of the Father Who bestows the Spirit of sonship, and as the Lord who was already reigning and soon to return in a power that transcended all social distinctions and racial barriers. That Jesus had once lived as God manifest in the flesh and yet Man among men, brought into play a new system of values in all human relationships, and the widest possible extension of the area of the common good. God is not merely the source

[1] *The Epistle to Diognetus*, v.

[2] Cf. E. F. Scott, *The Gospel and its Tributaries*, p. 98.

of Love; God is Love. Love of our neighbour at its noblest is "substantially" the same as the Love which is the secret of ultimate reality; unless the love that animates social service is believed in as one with the spirit that moves and directs all things, it is in the end but a fleeting anodyne for the world's pain, mysteriously born in the heart of Nature; some kind of biological necessity arising in the great process of things.

In answering the question of ethical and social emphasis in a revised Creed, it may be suggested that in the developed conception, "Lord," as applied to Jesus, we shall find the chief element in the symbol that we require. The new symbol must undoubtedly be short, if we are not to excite in men's minds as they sing or recite it just those intellectual questionings and reservations which the Apostles' Creed arouses to-day—to the detriment of our worship. To this end, the symbol must have as its central, dominating conception the Lordship of Christ. The danger of mere Jesuolatry must be repelled. This confession of faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ will then mean that all the religious and moral values of which his personality is both the bearer and the guarantee, are secure in the eternal order of things, in the nature and purpose of God; and that we are God's fellow-workers for the bringing in of the Kingdom. The title "Lord" also emphasises what needs to be emphasised, that even all human effort, vision, and faith are of God. The Kingdom is of the Lord. Jesus Christ is in reality the living symbol of the Christian faith. Our faith is not merely a common agreement among the individual experiences and thoughts of individuals; it possesses in the historical living personality of Jesus a centre of power and enlightenment which demand for their expression a community and a cult. No single individual can, acting and thinking for himself, give utterance to the faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. To call Jesus, "Lord,"

is not to add another god to the Pantheon ; it is to give expression to the universal truth about God and about humanity.

The authority of the Church, however, in regard to its Creed, is one that can impose itself only after the individual has yielded to the authority of the Gospel which is the Church's message and also its task. The Church's message is, essentially, the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Its main aim is a practical one ; to secure in the individual heart acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus, who lived among men, died, and rose from the dead ; a Lordship communicated and made real to us in story, dogma, and cult. The Church's supreme task is to mediate to men the life-giving personality of Jesus Christ ; it is the body of Christ. Its authority is largely created by the grandeur of the truth it has preserved throughout the centuries, and is still commissioned to proclaim. Its trust, its *depositum fidei*, is the Gospel ; which is the story of God's willingness to communicate Himself to men and to redeem them from all that blinds them to His purpose. The ultimate ground of the authority of the Church is that the Church itself believes in and lives by its own message. Only into such hands can such a trust be committed ; only from such hands will men receive it with obedience and faith.

PART III

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENCE TO RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

I. Conflict and Contribution

II. The Contribution of Physical Science

III. Physical Science and Values

IV. The Contribution of Biology

V. Christian Experience the Final Adaptation

VI. Religion without Revelation?

CHAPTER I

CONFLICT AND CONTRIBUTION

We have already seen that the necessarily subjective nature of individual religious experience does not prevent it from being the organ and instrument of the Divine authority. By the contribution of modern science to the question of religious certainty, I mean the growing emphasis which Science, in particular physical science and biology, now lays on the sovereignty of the mind perceiving. In former days emphasis was laid by Science on the independent external reality of what was perceived, as the basis of truth. The tendency of modern science is to recognise that the facts of Science are deliberately conceived abstractions from reality; that there are degrees of reality, and that scientific facts are true within the limits laid down by the scientific mind itself. In a very real sense Science makes its own world; much as the actuary constructs accurate tables of "lives" for an insurance company, without implying that he can predict that any particular individual will live to a certain age. This imaginary "life" does not exist, but is still a fact upon which huge money transactions may be founded. Similarly, the scientist's "facts" are not found ready made, but are products of his own thinking. Mind thus acknowledged as dominant, a movement is begun, not away from religion, but towards it.

Christian apologists, says Whitehead, picture themselves, in relation to scientific thought, as the "garrison of a fort surrounded by hostile forces."[1] He adds that

[1] *Science and the Modern World*, p. 235.

this attitude of attack and defence expresses a half-truth and makes a certain appeal to the popular mind. This may be true of that section of the popular religious mind which bases religious authority upon "authorities." The Roman Church, on this conception of authority, wisely refuses at least in theory, to acknowledge the autonomy of Science, and recognises no real division of labour in thought. "Protestant" religious thought, however, must also recognise more fully than it has done the claim of autonomy or "home-rule" for Science, as it must recognise the autonomy of Poetry, Painting, and Philosophy. The Reformers' appeal to the authority of Scripture laid them open ultimately to attack, say on the physical reality of the account of creation in Genesis; but it is also true to say that their appeal contained the veritable principle of free enquiry. The emphasis has been gradually shifted from the sacred writings themselves to the fact of the Holy Spirit. It is now more clearly seen that the inward witness of the Spirit has really nothing to do with the mass of literary, historical, and scientific questions which came to be identified with it; these represent only the mechanism for the conveyance of the Truth.

Thoughtful men to-day are sometimes disconcerted to find that the imagery of Science and the imagery of Religion are incompatible. In our creedal statements, the imagery employed is almost entirely derived from the conception of a universe whose limits are defined by our own earth and its surrounding heavens. Before we go on to discuss whether this incompatibility is really disabling or not, we must recognise clearly that it is a much more serious matter for the Christian Religion to alter its imagery, than for Science. Christianity is based upon a conception of the nature and purpose of God, which is believed to correspond to ultimate Reality. That conception is inseparably bound up with a certain historical happening in time,

the appearance of Jesus Christ in the world. As an historical religion, Christianity must needs, in its creedal expressions, bear and conserve the marks of its historical origin in the imagery it employs; the experience of the risen Christ can never cease also to be the experience of an historical Jesus. The historicity of Jesus and the identity of the risen Christ with Jesus in the experience of men, is displayed precisely in the fact that their experience is formulated theologically in terms of the universe as then known: Jesus "came down" from heaven; he "descended" into hell; he "rose again" and "ascended" into heaven. The Church of the first four centuries never contemplated the possibility that the reality of God might be shaken through scientific research; the great Creeds were formulated without a thought that they were intended pontifically to preserve a certain view of the universe, which, at the time, no one questioned. It was indeed a mighty stroke of speculation, which led Paul to Christianise the universe; yet his speculations were never directed against a scientific outlook which accepted the existence of crowds of demonic agencies and tiers of heavens, but only in favour of demonstrating the supreme place in the universe, of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. It was the fear of demonic agencies, and not the belief in their existence, that was swept away. Paul and all the New Testament writers have given us a God who, in whatever language His activities and purposes are described, is omnipotent Love; His omnipotence and omnipresence are stated in concrete form when He is said "to fill all things". But this doctrine of God is in no way inextricably bound up with any contemporary conception of the physical universe, although these writers would have found it impossible to express what they meant save in terms of it. Similarly to-day, we must see to it that any restatement of Christian doctrine does not demand a God, belief in whom is bound up with belief

in, say the quantum theory, and therefore liable to disappear with the next revolution in scientific thought.

The earliest movements of modern science originated with men who had no thought either of attacking or defending religious doctrine. Science was originally a purely intellectual adventure. Scientists were driven into a position of antagonism to religion, only by the ecclesiastical claim to oppose whatever seemed to threaten the unique position of the Church as an ark of salvation, and as a judge of correct thinking; whatever also was hostile to the idea of the unique position of our planet as the sphere on which salvation was wrought. The conflict did not become any less fierce with the coming of Protestant thought, which laid a contradictory emphasis both on the infallible Book, and on the validity of individual experience. Protestant thought, however, no longer officially regards the Bible as a text-book of science. Where psychology has shifted the centre of interest to the question of the objective validity of religious experience, the attack of the "illusionist" psychology may now safely be left for psychologists themselves to meet.

It is coming to be regarded as unscientific conduct on the part of psychologists to suggest that the mystical values of religion have no counterpart in ultimate reality, just because they are creations of the human mind itself; in view of the fact that physics and biology are in process of abandoning a purely mechanistic and deterministic interpretation of Nature, in favour of an interpretation which regards substance as a projection of the mind into the external world, and the organism as meaningless unless the life of the organism is understood in terms of our own knowledge of what it means to be alive. The purely illusionist psychology strikes at the root not only of religious knowledge, but of all knowledge whatsoever. Scientists to-day are often mystics. In other words, the scientist refuses to interpret the

external world, or that portion of it which he selects, purely in terms of the impressions conveyed by the senses. His aim is mostly description. He works with symbols. Some scientists may still make mechanical models of the "atom," but are increasingly disinclined to take them seriously. They are not nearly so much concerned, indeed may seriously doubt, whether "protons" and "electrons" really exist; the chief concern is to describe the way in which natural forces behave. The pure "visualiser" in science is now discouraged; his models are "thought-models." Professor Eddington confesses that the visualising habit dies hard, and that with all his training in abstract thinking, he still pictures an electron as a "hard, red, tiny ball," while the proton is "neutral grey." This bias of thinking in purely physical terms—probably never to be entirely extirpated—the scientist nowadays at least guards against, whilst admitting that reality may be "a child which cannot survive without its nurse, illusion."[1]

Scientists of this school admit that the physical entities with which they deal are actually behaving in a manner which makes it impossible to visualise their ordered movement in such a way that no exception at all can be imagined. They postulate, in Berkeleyan fashion, that "beneath them is a nature continuous with our own." Science is actually surveying the external world from within, which is the same thing as to say that the truth as it appears to us is part of ourselves. Scientific laws and theories are regarded as actually the product of mental activity, really deriving the raw material out of which they are constructed from certain given characteristics of the perceiving mind. "These characteristics are not free creations of the mind, but data without which science could not even begin to exist."[2] The scientist actually builds his own external

[1] *The Nature of the Physical World*, pp. xi. ff.

[2] E. W. Hobson, *The Domain of Natural Science*, pp. 474 f.

world, and refuses to believe that, on that account, it is all moonshine.[1]

A word or two more may be said regarding the so-called conflict between Religion and Science. I do not agree with those who say that the conflict ceases with an arrangement on both sides, to define their own spheres. At most, that can only be an armistice, and an armistice does not settle the question of frontiers. Even if frontier lines could be drawn, are we to forbid all crossing of them on either side? Both scientist and theologian must demand an untrammelled freedom, so far as their relation to one another is concerned; untrammelled freedom does not involve no relations at all, but the contrary. This freedom should not "involve the erection of rigid, impassable barriers which shall mark off domains which hold no communication with one another." [2] The scientist and the theologian must be able to learn from one another. I do not think that religious faith will ever feel itself secure, unless it is assured that a vision of God can also be obtained within the realm of science; on the other hand, if we get into the habit of thinking that the ultimate truth of things can be found anywhere, we shall cease to seek it.

The scientist deals with symbols. The very nature of his "facts,"—their abstract nature, produces in him a "scientific mind." The mathematical scientist at least, is aware that all his facts are abstractions from reality. To take the extreme instance, the mathematician's "facts" are lines, circles, ellipses, triangles; but no such abstractions exist in reality. The mathematical scientist, therefore, is very cautious in drawing conclusions which bear on matters that lie outside the boundaries of his own abstract world. The scientist was not always so scrupulous. From a mathematical point of view, the circle may be called the only perfect

[1] Cf. A. S. Eddington, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

[2] E. W. Hobson, *The Domain of Natural Science*, p. 501.

figure ; once upon a time, astronomers concluded that the planets must move in circles, because the circle is the perfect figure : they were wrong ; the planets' path turned out to be elliptical. The scientist was wrong because, for the moment, he became an artist and spoke as an artist, when he should have remained a mathematician. The scientist must, as J. W. N. Sullivan says, be " characterised by an inordinate appetite for facts and an absence of generosity in drawing conclusions from facts." [1]

There is a certain danger here. We may get into the habit of thinking that the scientific mind is a kind of mind suited only to a certain realm of knowledge, which suspends judgment on all matters outside its own range of facts. But has that type of mind no place in religious thought or in morals ? Is it not much required in these spheres ? A good example of the absence of a scientific habit of mind in religious thought may again be found in the kind of conclusions that have been drawn regarding the nature of religious experience from the *questionnaire* method of enquiry. Answers are received which are given by the kind of people who are in the habit of scrutinising their own religious experience ; hundreds of thousands of people who have a real religious experience, but are not in the habit of attending very closely to its structure and working, or cannot put what they feel in words, or are aware that some truths cannot be told, gave no answers at all. Introspection can only deal with conscious mental states, and must necessarily leave out of account those unconscious elements, especially the elements of suggestion, tradition, and common worship, which enter so largely into religious experience and direct our religious behaviour. The result has been that religious psychology has been for many years dominated by the notion that certain abnormal kinds of self-conscious, mystical religious experience were of the most importance. A truly

[1] *Aspects of Science*, p. 132. First Series.

scientific habit of mind, an " appetite for facts " and an " absence of generosity in drawing conclusions from facts," would have suggested that the introspective interpretation of religious experience is really founded on too narrow a range of facts.

In theological thinking also, there is a place for a wise and balanced agnosticism. Take the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine would never have appeared as an additional burden on the intellect, had it been presented scientifically, as really the result of a process of religious experience; as intended to ease thought, and make its expression possible, instead of burdening it. The doctrine came into being, *ne taceretur*, in order that we might not be unable to say anything.[1] Among the palmary facts of Christian experience are the influence of the life of Christ and the Spirit-filled life of believers. The Trinity is the attempt to reaffirm the unity of God in the light of these facts of experience. All theological thinking is necessarily symbolic; the Trinity is the symbolic affirmation of the faith that Personality is in God, that we may think of God in personal terms. " This Personal character is that side of His nature which is turned manward—it is like a ' Cape of Good Hope,' jutting out from a mountain range which, as it recedes, is lost to view in the ' *tenebræ æternæ* '—only to be expressed by the suspension of speech and the inspiration of sacred song." [2] Further, the scientific habit of mind would have largely saved orthodox Religion from its most unreasonable fear of pantheism, with its elaborate attempts to distinguish

[1] " Human utterance, in answer to the question ' Why three persons ? ' truly labours under a great insufficiency. We do, however, speak of three persons, not in order that we may speak in such terms, but that we may not be silent." (" Quum quæritur, quid tres, magna prorsus inopia humanum laborat eloquium. Dictum est tamen : tres personæ, non ut illud diceretur, sed ne taceretur.") Augustine, *De Trinitate*, v. 10.

[2] R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 208.

the transcendence and the immanence of God. The truth that God is in all things and in all His creatures is no denial of His moral transcendence and moral freedom. What Sorley calls "the holy ghost of logic"[1]—which is just another way of describing a boundless generosity in drawing conclusions from facts—has dominated theological thinking to its great hurt.

Moreover, the attempt completely to delimit the spheres of Religion and Science has tended to foster the belief that the scientific mind must not be actuated by feeling; because feeling disturbs the power of judgment and is a sign that we are merely believing what we wish to believe. Feeling, it ought rather to be recognised, does not give the interpretation of our experience its content, but lends it strength. "Feeling is a mass of idea at work within us." Feeling is not a cloak for ignorance, but a mantle that keeps knowledge alive and warm; it is not true that the more strongly we feel the less accurately can we know. Scientific research is not really cold and dispassionate. The scientist no doubt rigorously guards against the influence of mere emotional discharges; so must the religious man do also. But the scientist does care supremely about his subject. To care about anything supremely is to have feeling, whether it appears as disciplined intellectual curiosity, or as the supreme satisfaction of discovery:

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into our ken.

Galileo discovered the moons of Jupiter, we are told, *incredibili jocunditate animi*. All this gives point to the definition of feeling as "thought more or less in control of things"; [2] scientists are saddened when experiments go wrong, and glad when they succeed; they work

[1] *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 449.
[2] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Re-making*, pp. 80 f.

in an atmosphere of sustained, if controlled emotion. The bacteriologist may be influenced by a feeling for suffering mankind, while, at the same time, it is the passion for truth that controls all his action. When he is compelled, by the necessity for suspense of judgment, to withhold his serum from use until his results are perfected, he is of course controlled primarily by a love of truth ; but he is also moved by a sense of honour, and by humanitarian feeling. The love of truth and fear of error which characterise the finest research workers are both of inestimable moral value, and are never unaccompanied by feeling ; they may be said to represent an *anxiety* for truth. The real opposition is not between feeling and thinking, but between feeling and callousness. " It is not true," says Dr Whitehead, " that we observe best when we are entirely devoid of emotion." [1] The concentration of the scientist is itself a certain emotional state.

The scientist, equally with the religious thinker and the artist, is engaged in creative work. His whole personality is in his work ; not merely his intellect. The danger of appearing to settle the conflict between Religion and Science merely by delimiting the spheres, is that Religion may come to feel that scientists are nowadays inoffensive, respectable, and harmless ; that their aim is only descriptive—as though you could really describe what you do not know ; that for all practical religious purposes the conclusions of modern science may be ignored. This delimitation of territory has come to be regarded by Religion as a victory gained for itself against the encroachment of science. The scientist does not talk in this way ; he prefers to think of himself, not as withdrawing untenable claims, but rather as having asserted his " autonomy," won " home-rule " for science, and thereby set it free to make a contribution to religion, if so directed by truth. The recognition by the scientist of his own sphere of

[1] *Religion in the Making*, p. 124.

operation is not due to any steps taken by Religion to warn him off its own particular territory. The authority of Religion in the future and its whole conception of the supernatural, must go hand in hand with that return of Mystery which marks modern scientific thought. Of this we shall hear more in the course of our subsequent discussion.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE

The problems that religion has to face in its attitude towards Science may best be indicated by a general survey of the new world that scientists have created for themselves, both in Physical Science and in Biology. I speak of "the new world," because it is important to note that the modern fundamental scientist is engaged in building a new world of his own, apparently quite different from the ordinary world of the senses as it presents itself to the ordinary man. It is also important to note that religion has always been occupied in doing the same thing. The "scientific" world like the spiritual world of religion, is but the approach to reality. Both scientist and religious thinker now walk not by sight, but by faith.

In this chapter I shall attempt a very general survey of the modern outlook in physical science, and an estimate of its significance for religion; in particular, for the basis of individual experience on which religious authority rests.

Many modern scientists are inclined to believe that the world of "pure" or "exact" science has been built on much too narrow principles. Who can read even those portions of the work of mathematical physicists like Eddington and Whitehead which the average non-mathematical mind can understand, without realising that some great thing has happened? The atom has been divided and now appears as something like an invisible solar system. The material of the world and of our own bodies can be defined as "disembodied

charges of electricity." A scientist like Eddington can thus describe the process for a scientific man of entering into a room through the door :

> I am standing on the threshold about to enter a room. It is a complicated business. In the first place I must shove against an atmosphere pressing with a force of fourteen pounds on every square inch of my body. I must make sure of landing on a plank travelling at twenty miles a second round the sun—a fraction of a second too early or too late, the plank would be miles away. I must do this whilst hanging from a round planet head outward into space, and with a wind of æther blowing at no one knows how many miles a second through every interstice of my body. The plank has no solidity of substance. To step on it is like stepping on a swarm of flies. Shall I not slip through? No, if I make the venture one of the flies hits me and gives a boost up again ; I fall again and am knocked upwards by another fly ; and so on. I may hope that the net result will be that I remain about steady ; but if unfortunately I should slip through the floor or be boosted too violently up to the ceiling, the occurrence would be, not a violation of the laws of Nature, but a rare coincidence. These are some of the minor difficulties. I ought really to look at the problem four-dimensionally as concerning the intersection of my world-line with that of the plank. Then again it is necessary to determine in which direction the entropy of the world is increasing in order to make sure that my passage over the threshold is an entrance, not an exit.
>
> Verily, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a scientific man to pass through a door. And whether the door be barn door or church door it might be wiser that he should consent to be an ordinary man and walk in rather than wait till all the difficulties involved in a really scientific ingress are resolved.[1]

I do not pretend to understand all the scientific process of thought involved in forming such a conception of what we are accustomed to call a portion of the external world. All the terms used in the foregoing passage are symbolic, in the sense that the writer

[1] *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 342.

attempts to describe as accurately as language will allow and with literary power, the way in which a scientific man knows the universe to behave at the point where a man is entering a door. I have quoted the passage, not merely to illustrate the change that has taken place in the world of physics and to show how this world differs *in toto* from the world reported to us by our senses; but also to show that the world of our senses is also a world of faith. It may be contended, with some justice, that to use the term "faith" in this connexion, is to mislead; and might have the effect of emptying religious faith of an essential part of its content, namely personal trust. It is true that the faith involved in living and working in this scientific world so described by science is of no moral value, inasmuch as it is one without which life would be impossible; unlike religious faith, it is confirmed for us not only at every step we ourselves take, but by the action of others. To that extent, such a faith, just because it so easily becomes second-nature, involves a degree of trust that is really infinitesimal in comparison with religious faith. On the other hand, to retain the term faith in this connexion is not a mere quibble, nor is it a mere cheap apologetic point. It is useful to employ the term in both senses if only to emphasise the rational element in all faith; to stress the essential sanity of religious genius, and to dispel the idea that there is anything crazy, reckless, illusory, or irrational in the moral and speculative flights, ventures, and sacrifices of religious faith.

The conflict between Science and Religion, as we have seen, tends to be resolved, in a rather facile manner, by rigidly delimiting their spheres. Canon Streeter has tried to do it, in a popular way, in his book, *Reality*.[1] He asserts categorically that scientific thought consists in judgments of quantity, religious thought in judgments of quality. There are two ways of knowledge:

[1] B. H. Streeter, *Reality*, pp. 71 ff.

The method of Science, applicable to "visible and material things"; the other a "direct intuitive knowledge," supplementing and checking scientific results, applicable where the "invisible something" appears. True, the scientist concerns himself chiefly with order and measurement: the religious man is concerned with values. Yet the world is no longer, from the scientist's point of view, to be divided into a material world and a spiritual world; but rather are there two aspects of the one world, an aspect that can be measured and one that cannot. It is more than doubtful whether real confusion of thought is not produced, rather than assurance of faith, by the assumption that there are two kinds of knowledge. Do we not thereby encourage a direful separation of internal and external experience, and an obscurantist escape into "a haven of peace down the mystic way"?[1] Inasmuch as both scientific and religious truth are aspects of one world, the measurements of the scientist are bound to have certain qualitative results. There is a qualitative difference between a world that can be measured, and is ideally a unity; and one that cannot. There is a qualitative difference between a world mechanically conceived, and a purposive universe. Science is concerned with values also. Canon Streeter's concrete illustration is open to criticism. "One picture," he says, "is not two and three-quarter times as beautiful as another, nor is one crime three and a half times as heinous as another, even if the prices paid for two pictures, or the terms of imprisonment awarded for two crimes, may be in these proportions."[2] Is this illustration really to the point? Is it quite true that the physicist has only to do with a world, a sheer abstraction of his own, where nothing

[1] C. Singer in *Science Religion and Reality*, p. 148. A warning example of the resulting position will be found in *Things to Come*, by Mr J. Middleton Murry, pp. 134 ff. (esp. p. 139).

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

that cannot be measured, is relevant? What of the biologist? Is it true even of the physicist? Canon Streeter's illustration is misleading. Are we to say, for example, that the prices paid for two pictures and the proportion that exists between them, have no relation whatever to the æsthetic qualities of the pictures? The purchaser is surely prepared to give the higher price for one picture, not perhaps because it is exactly two and three-quarter times more beautiful than the other, but because it is *more* beautiful; the "more" in the second alternative is an attempt to express in terms of quantity, an appreciation of certain æsthetic qualities. These qualities may consist of the emotion aroused by colours or combination of colours, forms or combination of forms, skill in brush work. I have no doubt that an art critic, if he were compelled to decide on the comparative values of two pictures, would be able to devise some system of "marks" for these features. This would involve a judgment of quantities which, added up and interpreted by the critic's own mind, would issue as a judgment of quality. The personal element cannot be excluded, and it is precisely this personal element which prevents art-criticism, though still a science, from becoming an "exact" science. Similarly the term of imprisonment is an attempt—a blundering attempt it may be—on the part of society to express its sense of the heinousness of a certain crime. Terms of imprisonment are determined by certain judgments of quality which consider both criminal and society. Similarly, we must assume that the expert art-dealer, or art-patron, is not merely a vulgar speculator.

There can be no doubt that the physical scientist concerns himself chiefly with the metrical aspect of the world, and he may deliberately exclude from his vision all other aspects that cannot be measured; his facts may be mathematical symbols, pure abstractions, with no individuality. These have no actual equivalents;

the laws they obey are valid only in a world of symbols. The modern scientist, however, is concerned not only with measurement, but with the thing measured. He admits as much, even when he says, as it were, that his business is to obtain quantities,—but of what, it is not for him to say; that abstract relations in time and space are simply tools for the apprehension of reality. If he be a biologist, he will most certainly admit that the conception of the organism has a qualitative value.[1] I came across the saying of a modern scientist—an *obiter dictum* to be sure—that "Einstein is the greatest Jew since Jesus." Whatever we may think of the degree of imaginative perception in the utterance, it implies at least that Einstein's mathematical discoveries have made some momentous *qualitative* contribution to knowledge and to history; otherwise, there could not be a shadow of aptness in such a comparison. Even physical science does display "certain loose ends projecting into the unknown." The scientist cannot really get all the content he desires in his symbol unless he realises that it stands for a wider aspect of the thing thus symbolised. The facile acceptance of delimitation of territories with Science, on the terms that Science deals only with quantity, and religion with quality, is fatal to religion itself. Logically, it would simply mean that study of the physical universe has nothing to do with Christianity.[2] The discovery that the universe can be measured and that *we* can measure it, is surely itself a truth, based on a faith that Nature is a unity. The religious conviction that there is one God, not many, is a judgment of quantity based on judgments of quality; it has also had certain epoch-making qualitative results for religion.

The teachings of science, so far as religion is concerned, are not irrelevant. We can no longer draw

[1] Cf. pp. 161 ff., *infra* of the present book.

[2] Cf. C. E. Raven, *The Creator Spirit*, p. 14.

a rigid frontier line between "two ways of knowing." That is a relic of the days when men believed in two worlds—the world of science, and the world of religion.[1] As we read the passage from Professor Eddington which I quoted, I think we must have felt that there pervades it a sense of wonder that a scientist can enter a door into a room at all and that Reality is such that it enables him to do it at all. His description of the act is accomplished by a set of symbols which suggest an ultimate reality, of which the scientist himself and his consciousness are only a part. He knows that by stating his entry into the room in terms of certain physical facts he has not yet completely described what happens. That he should regard that plank as a thing that will bear his weight, a "substance"; that he walks by faith, and not by sight; that such a faith should be second-nature to him—these considerations also are to be taken into account in our estimate of what really happens. The scientist is not merely engaged in an interesting experiment, not merely confirming the laws of Nature he has discovered, when he enters a room. The door through which he enters may be the door of his own home. Its inhabitants, each one, may be scientifically described in the same terms as the planks on which they stand; the sound of their voices may, in its journey to his ear, be expressible in terms of some mathematical equation. But the scientist himself moves in the matter, in obedience to a meaning these sounds convey which he alone can value and understand.

The central truth which we must grasp firmly is that the modern scientist is still engaged in the attempt to define the boundaries of his own sphere. When scientists themselves are still discussing the question of their own frontiers, it is idle to suggest a reconciliation on the lines so frequently suggested to-day. At the moment, the physicist in particular has become aware that he has made the boundaries too narrow.

[1] Cf. L. L. Whyte, *Archimedes*, p. 31.

He realises that everything that is observed in the sphere of physics or chemistry cannot even scientifically be expressed in terms of space, time, or matter. These can now be referred to as a "Newtonian set of abstractions." Formerly, these three were regarded as the only terms in which a *scientific* knowledge of the external world was at all conceivable. Everything else, from the physicist's point of view, was unreal, as being outside the realm of comparative observation. Moral and æsthetic values were products of emotion; to some scientists, therefore, they were illusion. But now, space, time and matter have been analysed by the scientist himself; they are the product of the scientist's own mind; space, time and matter are as dependent for their reality on the scientist's mind, as colour is on the mind of the artist, or duty on the conscience of the moralist. Apart from the eye that beholds it, beauty is nothing; without the conscience that apprehends it, duty is meaningless.

> Doth the mind that can behold
> The wondrous beauty of the works and days,
> Create the image that her thoughts unfold?

We seem to be left with an insubstantial pageant of a universe unless we cease to suspect that all that so depends on mind cannot really exist. If our minds build the world, we may go on to assume that the more successful we are in arranging certain experimental laws in a logical order, the more deeply convinced we ought to be that in this order there is reflected a universal "ordering," to which our own minds are akin. Physical science needs this assurance for itself, and also suggests to us what is of even more value for our apologetic purpose; it implies that except as linked up with the mind that consciously perceives it, the physical world is an abstraction and not a reality. "The conclusion forced upon me in the course of a life devoted to natural science is that the universe as it is

assumed to be in physical science is only an idealised world, while the real universe is the spiritual universe in which spiritual values count for everything."[1] Mere "brute fact" is a complete fiction; our world is an experience of ours, and is not to be regarded as on the level of a mere grammatical exercise for analysis or parsing; only in so far as we live in it and it is our actual environment, experienced and known, is it real. Science has itself restored Mind to the sovereign position. We need no longer be afraid that science may become the handmaid of materialism. The words that follow are, it may be, a travesty of the actual tenets of bygone "naturalistic" schools of thought; but they correctly describe the conclusions which they fostered in the popular mind. The fear has no longer a basis lest "little particles of matter wandering about purposelessly in space and time produced our minds, our hopes and fears, the scent of the rose, the colours of the sunset, the songs of the birds, and our knowledge of the little particles themselves."[2]

[1] J. S. Haldane, *The Sciences and Philosophy*, p. 273.

[2] J. W. N. Sullivan, *Gallio*, pp. 76 f. Cf. his *Bases of Modern Science*, p. 237.

CHAPTER III

PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND VALUES

PHYSICAL science is beginning to feel that its concepts need to be widened. We see that some strange new thing has happened in Science, when a scientist like Dr Whitehead includes in a scientific treatise a chapter on Wordsworth and Shelley.[1] His motive, briefly put, is that both these poets have seen in Nature facts that escaped the notice of the scientist, an omission for which the scientist is culpable; Wordsworth was right in refusing to hand over inorganic matter to the scientist of his own day, who "murdered to dissect"; to him all things are living things:

> Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
> And on the earth! Ye visions of the hills!
> And souls of lonely places! can I think
> A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
> Such ministry, when ye through many a year
> Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
> On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
> Impressed upon all forms the characters
> Of danger or desire; and thus did make
> The surface of the universal earth
> With triumph and delight, with hope and fear
> Work like a sea? . . .[2]

It is a new thing to be told that Science has missed seeing in Nature, deliberately missed seeing, what corresponds to those values expressed by the poet as

[1] *Science and the Modern World*, Chapter V.
[2] *Prelude* I., 464-75.

"Visions of the hills," "Souls of lonely places," that make the surface of the earth :

> With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
> Work like a sea.[1]

I encountered, also, in Professor Eddington's Gifford lectures, a rather startling conjunction ; a most elaborate, and to me unintelligible mathematical formula for the action of wind on water, and alongside it set these glittering lines from Rupert Brooke :

> There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
> And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
> Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
> And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
> Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
> A width, a shining peace, under the night.

It is worthy of deep attention to note that the mathematical formula, and the laughter and dance of the waves are both regarded by this scientist as symbolic creations, the one of the scientist's mind, the other of the poet's ; both have what corresponds to them in ultimate reality ; both "appeal to the same mind in different relationships." The waves themselves were guiltless of any intention to convey the idea that they were either geometrical or happy ; yet Nature (or God ?) means us to believe that our geometrical and our

[1] Dr Whitehead, I think, misunderstands Wordsworth, when he says that he disliked science ; while Shelley loved it. Probably he knew less of it than Shelley, and is only protesting against the absorption of natural science in abstractions, when he speaks of scientists as those who "murder to dissect," or as men who "peep and botanise" on their mothers' graves (see p. 151). Wordsworth can, on occasion, express imaginatively the conclusions even of a materialistic science in the presence of death :

> "No motion has she now, no force :
> She neither hears nor sees,
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees."

æsthetic apprehension are alike in touch with Reality.[1] Moral and æsthetic values are not treated as either illusory or negligible, having no counterpart in ultimate reality, on the ground that they are creations of mind. I am quite aware that Eddington does not go so far as Whitehead, who seems to think it possible that Science may one day take account of "values" as part of a scientific scheme: both however regard values as an integral part of reality; both recognise that mind creates the world of space and time in which we live and work. Eddington lays stress on the self-imposed limitation of the scientific mind to a world of abstractions, which, just because that world is not intended to make any fresh contacts with reality, can be described mathematically; in excluding values from the *scheme* of science, he delivers us from the chilling prospect of having to do with a God who is the supreme Mathematician, as in the last century He was pictured as the supreme Engineer.

I might also remind you of the passage in Wordsworth's famous Essay, where he speaks of Poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science." He goes on to say, "If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present." These words are prophetic; the scientific revolution has come: but of its coming many of our modern poets and literary men, and some theologians seem to be still unaware. The underlying philosophy of many modern writers is a pessimism based on an outworn and discredited materialism, and on the notion that science reveals to us a purposeless universe.[2] A good deal of our theology

[1] *Nature of the Physical World*, pp. 317, 329.

[2] Thomas Hardy always deeply resented being called a pessimist, with some reason. At the same time the domination in his mind of the scientific idea of a purposeless universe is apparent (cf. p. 66, *supra*).

still regards the natural as a system of material cause and effect, into which the supernatural is introduced as another operating cause. The scientific revolution has come, and instead of Religion having to come to terms with Science, Science is disposed to come to terms not only with Religion, but with Art and Poetry.

In meeting the modern approach of Science to Religion we must exercise caution. Here is a point where a scientific mind is needed in theology also. It is not meant that scientists should become poets or theologians. Scientists indeed stand with a measuring-rod in their hands, like the angel of old, to measure the universe; but they admit frankly that their measuring-rods are not objective unchanging things. They actually shrink or expand in their hands, according to their direction and the speed at which they move. Distances and times are relative to the mind that perceives. We live in a world where it is bedrock fact that a train may be moving at one and the same moment at two miles an hour or at fifty miles, according to the speed of a train running parallel in which you happen to be, or the fact that you are standing on a platform watching the train. It seems that we are inhabitants of a world which continually demands an effort of mind on our part in order to enable us to know where we are, and external things are; a world of four dimensions, not of three. It is this predominance of mind, of consciousness in the widest sense, which is significant for the relations between Science and Religion. The scientist has begun to feel that the "standardised concepts of science are only valid within narrow limitations, perhaps too narrow for science itself." The poet and the saint inhabit their own sphere of reality; but they remind the scientist that their values belong to a wider and much less limited view of Nature than the scientist has been accustomed to take.

The eye—it cannot choose but see ;
We cannot bid the ear be still ;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against, or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress ;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Mind is, indeed, not wholly passive but has a selective power ; yet this domain of " wise passiveness " must not be contracted by an arbitrary decision of the scientist as to what is reality and what is not. " A wise passiveness " will itself extend the range of facts to be selected. The physicist has discovered that the structure of his universe has been, hitherto, a closed system, determined by certain laws of cause and effect ; a mechanism, only because he had himself closed all the doors against every event that cannot be expressed in terms of matter and motion. Now, by the application of a magnifying glass to " matter," he has not only discovered electrons, but, in addition, that an electron may behave in quite an unwarrantable way ; such as refusing to discharge its energy save in integral and not in fractional amounts, and by jumping from place to place without appearing to cover any distance. I do not pretend to know how this behaviour of the electron is determined ; but I am deeply interested that scientists should so speak, and that they are compelled by sheer anxiety for truth to shatter the former mechanistic and deterministic view of physical reality. The universe is no longer, to the scientist, a closed system.

Again however we must think with caution, and not expect that scientists should become religious prophets. None of them have seen God at any time. Professor Eddington is certainly disposed to think that underlying the world of science there is what he carefully calls a universal " mind-stuff," of a character like our

own. He has said much to indicate that this conclusion may have very important results for the validity of religious belief; but he himself is the first to warn the religious thinker that "Science cannot tell whether the world-spirit is good or evil, and its halting argument for the existence of a God might equally well be turned into an argument for the existence of a Devil."[1] I think we have much more reason to be concerned about the behaviour of Religion towards the new Science, than about the attitude of the new Science towards Religion. If Religion fought Science when she came with a dagger to meet her, Religion must not be constrained to make terms with her when she comes with a gift. Religion must not ask Science to do her work for her. Christianity has never made terms with contemporary science at any period in its history; least of all, can Christianity make terms or be expected to make terms with a conception of God as the Universal Mind, which, however impressive, is confessedly and deliberately outside the scheme of science itself. The religious apologist to-day must not be deceived by the fact that contemporary science is non-mechanistic; that matter has come to be conceived as disembodied energy, does not make it any more akin or less impervious to spiritual power, as Religion conceives it. The refusal of the modern scientists to regard the universe as a closed system does not in itself leave room for miracle; the refusal is in order to open the scientific minds to concepts which formerly were regarded as outside its interest. The day may come when the limits of scientific knowledge will be reached; Dr Whitehead looks forward to the day when science will shew nature as self-explanatory; "the sheer statement," he says, "of what things are, may contain elements explanatory of why things are."[2] Will Religion then be superseded? He has one other

[1] *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 338.
[2] *Science and the Modern World*, p. 115.

haunting sentence which I would also like to quote: "apart from it (religion), human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience." Against this picture he sets the religious vision as "our one ground for optimism." To this utterance we must add that Christianity is not only a religion of revelation, but also a religion of redemption; the world is not a problem to be solved, but a conquest to be undertaken. For this conquest man, by himself, is insufficient; our faith is in the victory of God. We need to be delivered out of this present world, while still in it.

Religious apologetic always needs to guard against the attempt to establish the authority of religion by means of scientific conceptions that may alter with the next scientific revolution. We must be careful of regarding the modern interpretation of the physical universe as direct confirmation of religious beliefs. The fact, for example, that strict causality seems to have disappeared permanently as an interpretation of the structure of the physical universe, may be interpreted religiously in two ways: it means that mind is no longer subject to deterministic law; but it also means that there is no longer any deterministic law to which it can be subject, and it inaugurates a profound change in the older conception of miracle. Modern science can bring forward no reason why an observed sequence of events should ever be broken; where an exception appears, this is taken by the scientist only as a summons and challenge to further investigation and wider experiment. Science knows of laws to which up to the present there has been no exception; but of none to which no future exception is possible. Science deals only with "a relatively settled order." The older conception of miracle does undoubtedly rest upon the older scientific conception of absolutely determined laws of Nature, of which a miracle is a breach or suspension. Like other phases of theological thought, it

really rests upon a materialistic conception of the natural world ; a conception which is necessary for the interpretation of miracle, if it be regarded only as an unusual and striking event. To-day, it is often the ordinary workings of Nature, as interpreted by science, that are unusual and striking, and we learn to find in our common daily experience the " hand of God." Is it not the religious interpretation of our experience, that alone causes us to say, " The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not ? ", where for the experience of a non-religious man there would be no miracle. To say that the whole is supernatural does not really help matters, and is merely to introduce a conception—the supernatural—of which science rightly takes no account ; it would also be a denial of the facts of religious experience. Nothing is wholly natural or wholly supernatural ; life as interpreted by our experience of life alone creates the distinction between natural and supernatural, ordinary and miraculous. Only those who are accustomed to think of the psychological as the unreal and the purely subjective, will find this position unsatisfying. " We cannot distinguish the natural as the mechanical and the supernatural as the free, for we do not know how much freedom there is in the natural, or how much law in the supernatural." [1] It is, for example, wholly misleading to base belief in ultra-sacramentarian ideas of a change in the elements at Communion, or in the physical resurrection of Jesus, on the non-materialistic and non-mechanistic attitude of modern science. We cannot say that wherever a nexus of physical cause and effect is visibly absent, God is present in miracle. A non-mechanistic view of the universe does not make it any easier, than a mechanistic view does, to establish the fact of miracle, or to solve the question of pain and moral evil ; nor does it make personal immortality any more certain. These are essentially judgments of religious experience.

[1] J. Oman, *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 297.

Let us briefly scrutinise the gifts which the new physical science brings in her hand.

1. First and foremost, physical science has offered us the truth, that out of the world as she knows it have arisen minds that are capable of constructing a world fit to live in, out of a dance of electrons; a ground where we can walk without fear of falling through, or of being blown away; in which we can dig without the shame and distress of finding that our spades bend in our hands.

2. Secondly, if the mind of man can create scientific "values" like space, time, and matter out of electrons radiating energy, as science suggests, Religion may equally claim that her own particular values are not colours arbitrarily painted upon a scientific world; that they really represent an existent spiritual world; that we are not victims of misrepresentation but are really fulfilling the purpose for which we are here when we believe in the Love of God, as truly as when we walk the solid earth.

3. The finest gift which physical science brings to Religion to-day is a fresh encouragement to trust our own religious experience. The objective reality of religious knowledge is just as much involved in the act of knowing, as it is in the case of theoretic knowledge. Regard this objectivity as something merely imposed from without either on the religious or the theoretic judgment, and you disturb the foundations of all knowledge. Distrust religious experience, or regard it as illusion, and you are bound to exercise the same distrust towards knowledge of the external world. The fact that we think of God in terms of what we know of our own personality, is no more an argument that our thought is illusion, than the relativity of our conception of the external world, in terms of space, time and substance, is an argument that if you abolished all the

people who believe in a world in such terms, you would abolish the world itself. Theoretic knowledge does not rest solely on observation and reasoning. Tyndall said of Faraday's speculations on electro-magnetism : " Amid much that is entangled and dark, we have flashes of wondrous insight, which appear less the product of reasoning than of revelation." The man of science has visions also ; the strange thing is that the average man will often trust the visions of the man of science, and distrust the visions of the man of God. One reason may be that, as R. H. Hutton said long ago, " men have learnt their tests of certainty in a region which is not spiritual at all " ;[1] they learn these tests in the region of sense-experience. We are, indeed, in the constant habit of accepting scientific truths, especially those that are of popular interest and utility, on the bare authority of the scientists ; but behind that acceptance, there is the conviction that, were it possible for us to make the same experiments, we would reach the same results. We forgo these tests and admit our dependence on authority, largely because the facts offered to us have become, or are fitted to become an essential part of our ordinary life and thought.

Nevertheless, the assumption that sense-experience is the final guarantee persists ; consequently, the habit of mind is introduced into religious experience also, of expecting that religion must also afford certain external guarantees of its truth. This external guarantee may be found in some form of pragmatism. Christianity has never been deeply concerned as to whether its beliefs " work " in this present world : it is much more concerned in moulding the world to its own beliefs, and in renouncing and conquering all that makes them impossible. If, however, it is regarded as precarious and incompatible that the truth of our religious beliefs should be established just because they " work," another danger emerges. The idea arises that God

[1] *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, p. 30.

Himself must provide the guarantees required in an authoritative church, or an authoritative book. In both cases, the certainty of religion is interpreted in terms of scientific authority, as it is understood by the average man. The trust, however, which we give to the discoveries of the scientist, is not quite the same as our trust in religious truth ; there is a certain kind of personal concern in our demand for religious truth, the very existence and satisfaction of which is itself a demonstration of the objective reality of our religious knowledge : religious faith itself contributes a weight and a quality to religious knowledge which is distinctive.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTRIBUTION OF BIOLOGY

We have seen that modern physical science, delivered from the tyranny of a naturalistic philosophy, has elevated mind into a position of sovereignty, and does not shrink from postulating a universal substratum of mind beneath the things that appear. But the world of our experience is much more than a problem to be solved; it is also a life to be lived. In the facts of pain and evil we are faced with an apparent contradiction between the interests of the individual life, and what appears to be the purpose or purposelessness of the universal life:

> Higher than heaven they sit
> Life and her consort Law;
> And one whose countenance lit
> In mine more perfect awe.
> Fain had I deemed their peer,
> Beside them throned above;
> Even Him who casts out fear,
> Unconquerable Love,
> And 'twas on earth alone that I his beauty saw.[1]

Physical science cannot tell us whether the universal "Logos" is Father or Devil, but can only describe it as Life wedded to Law, "Life and her consort Law." Physical science invites us to postulate the universal mind, but not to commit ourselves to its keeping; invites submission, but not loyal obedience. Can biological science, the science of what it is to be alive, give any suggestion of a purposiveness in "Life," which

[1] W. Watson, *The Hope of the World.*

invites the conviction that it is at least not irrelevant to regard the moral and spiritual values—created in the actual experience of the highest living organism, the personal being, Man—as representing the highest achievement of a Divine purpose of communion and collaboration with the human soul ?

Physical Science has delivered itself from the idea of sheer determinism. Are we brought back to the idea of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or can Biology suggest a certain purposiveness in the development of life ? Is the development from inorganic to organic, from vegetable to animal irreversible, or is it like the uncoiling of a rope ? A rope does not uncoil itself, but it moves with equal ease forwards or backwards into the coil again. Is the life-process as heedless of the results it has attained in human consciousness and in religious experience, as a rope is of the ship it once moored ? Or is our individual experience of God its highest manifestation ?

In considering the bearing of Biological Science upon religious belief, we have passed into a world where Life is the predominant factor ; from the inorganic to the organic world. The plant and the animal are organised structures which we call organisms. The organism is the unit of biology and is the concrete form in which Life most clearly expresses itself. We must, however, remember that modern physics has taught us to call even a stone, if not an " organism "—and some would even do so—at least an " organisation," a product of ceaseless energy caught and organised in a particular way. Yet from the behaviour of " disembodied charges of electricity " in a rock, to their behaviour in the life of plant and animal, and in the highest form of life we know, human consciousness, is a long journey. It will be well to refrain from calling a stone an " organism," unless we wish to become mere " behaviourists." Life is not just a more complex form of organisation, and organisation is not a complete inter-

pretation of life. Modern evolutionary science is no longer content to explain human consciousness from elements that are present in the lowest form of energy, or even in plant or animal life ; it holds as an axiom that the higher cannot be explained from the lower. The " promise and potency " of the highest life does not slumber in what we know as " matter." There are certain " lifts " or " increments " in evolutionary progress, of which the appearance of the growing plant, the lower animal and *homo sapiens*, are examples. No biologist would now say that man is merely the highest organism because he is the most complicated. Man is the highest organism, because he can think ; not merely associate ideas as animals are able to do, but can form general concepts,—remember, compare, forecast. He can " name the creatures " ; he can arrange his ideas, analyse and classify ; he can create " values," truth, beauty, and goodness. The Life-force is an idea that has passed into common speech ; but there is no scientific indication that this Life-force, any more than the matter and motion it has supplanted, is inherently capable of producing the highest kind of life we know—human consciousness. It is not *scientifically* true to say that :

> All the music of the moon
> Sleeps in the plain egg of the nightingale,

any more than it is scientifically true to say that the oak is embedded in the acorn. Browning is truer to the modern scientific conception, when, speaking of the gift of music, he says :

> And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
> That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.

Science has ceased to explain the higher phenomena of life by attempting to fit them into their cradles.

It has to be remembered that pure physical science,

by its present insistence on the sovereignty and autonomy of mind and its willingness to entertain the idea that its own sphere of observed facts rests upon a universal substratum of mind, has not told us nearly all that we desire to know. There are even such phenomena as *unconscious* mental states, which yet play a very real part in conscious life. Indeed mental states cannot be sharply divided into conscious and unconscious (or subconscious). There is a variety of conscious states—the dreaming state, sense of rhythm, the semi-consciousness of the artist or poet in a creative mood. There are different degrees of awareness. Our building up of a world of space, time and matter is at least accomplished subconsciously and by instinctive reaction to environment. Anything else would be intolerable. To walk on solid ground becomes a habit, though none the less a result of faith in our own experience :

> The centipede was happy quite
> Until the toad, for fun, said
> " Pray which leg comes after which ? "
> This wrought his mind to such a pitch,
> He lay distracted in the ditch,
> Considering how to run.

Such a mood would effectually prevent even Professor Eddington from entering his own door ! The question we still need to ask, which Biology may help us to answer, is whether there are any signs of at least a " purposiveness " in the lower organic world which will enable us to say that man, in the fullness and richness of his conscious life, is not a meaningless accident in the scheme of things.

The oak represents a " lift " or an " increment ", as compared with the acorn. The song of the nightingale is an " increment," as compared with the bird in the egg. Something has been " added," which was not there before. *Homo sapiens* represents the crowning increment in the biological process. You remember

the story of the old lady who heard that man is descended from the monkey; and, being assured that it was true, said: "Don't you think we ought to hush it up?" If it were true, I for one would certainly be rather ashamed of it. Fortunately the truth is that the ape remains an ape because he refused to become our ancestor, when the unearned increment of human consciousness was offered him. He is after all, as was said by one distinguished biologist, but a poor relation.

Purpose is, of course, a somewhat ambiguous word to use, and we had better speak of "purposiveness." Purpose suggests the old form of the argument from design, where purpose meant contrivance, a kind of external adaptation of means to ends. Since Darwin's day, it has been made clear that the adaptations of Nature are not on the same level as what happens when a man makes a chair or an engineer makes a bridge. Vermin do not exist in order to promote cleanliness, nor are there fish in the sea in order to make a livelihood for fishermen. A God supreme in ingenuity is not, *ipso facto*, omnipotent and all-wise; rather may it be asserted that if a being needs to contrive and to be ingenious, it is an indication that his actual powers are limited.[1] Absurd as these ideas of God now appear, we are still continually tempted to accept a mechanical view of Nature, and to christen it religious, by filling convenient gaps in the scientist's structure with a vision of an omnipresent, intelligent spirit. Professor Haldane is right in classifying as materialistic both the older theological idea that the structure of organisms was given them by a Creator in a remote past, a structure which continues to function mechanically; and the idea of the mechanistic biologist that the structure was acquired in the course of long ages through the influence of natural selection.[2] (It might, however, surprise him to know how few competent theologians now hold such

[1] Cf. E. W. Hobson, *The Domain of Natural Science*, pp. 493 f.
[2] *The Sciences and Philosophy*, p. 218.

a notion !) There is also a profound risk in conceiving of God as a Geometer or Mathematician, and in attempting to see Him in the midst of a system of equations, as in older days men visualised Him manipulating a system of contrivances. That kind of idea can have only one result ; He will become a "god like unto them." Here is a supreme example of the way in which Religion may step out of its own vaster sphere, and try to inhabit the narrower one which the scientist has constructed. God is Spirit, and they that would see Him must seek Him in Spirit and in "Reality," in that spiritual substratum to which our own consciousness is akin.

We must therefore be careful lest, when we interrogate Biology for signs of purposiveness, we do not confuse purposiveness with contrivance. Let us, first of all, be sure of the question we ask. The idea of purpose, to use the ambiguous word, can only be obtained from our knowledge of ourselves. The idea is projected by us upon Nature. The idea of purpose, however, like all ideas gained from self-knowledge, must be closely scrutinised. Is the purpose we seek like that of the artist or of the artisan ? The carpenter has a picture in his mind of the table he is about to make, and he makes its parts according to certain measurements and then fits them together. The poet does not work in this way ; the poem—in all "inevitable" poetry—only takes shape as the poet begins to realise his inspiration in words. A good man does not live his life in accordance with a fixed system of rules or a fully conscious and preconceived plan ; neither does he reflect upon his own goodness. An effective speaker is not one who has reduced all he has to say, beforehand, to words and sentences. What we are seeking for in the facts of biology is a purpose, not external to, but internally expressed in the movement and evolution of living things. The Divine Purpose is best symbolised by the artist's purpose. The artist does not merely

use his material, but is also used and controlled by it :

> The world is unto God a work of art
> Of which the unaccomplish'd heavenly plan
> Is hid in life within the creature's heart,
> And for perfection looketh unto man.[1]

It has been said that the resentment aroused by the views of men like Huxley and Tyndall was not due to the fact that they made man an integral part of the animal kingdom ; but that they presented him with a universe entirely purposeless, in which he himself was a meaningless accident. This is quite true. Biological Science, to-day, presents us with a view of the universe which, at least, does not make the quest for a Divine Purpose impossible and irrelevant. We have already seen how physical science, by the enthronement of mind as the great world-builder, has delivered us from the thought of man as the product of a physically determined necessity. The laws of physics and chemistry are themselves the result of man's own reflection upon certain portions of reality abstracted from the whole. In a very real sense, in his formulation of these laws, man takes out of Nature what he puts into it. The significant thing is that Nature should herself produce a being whom she allows so to do ; there is, as it has been put, no " man Friday," and " the footsteps on the sands of time are our own." This does not land us in pure subjectivism ; we did not make the sands of time, nor make them such that they can bear and preserve a human footprint. The physical domain itself is such as to render possible " its conceptual representation by laws and schemes." [2] If physical science thus excludes the scientist himself from the range of causally determined facts, modern biology has ceased to see in the phenomenon of Life merely the

[1] Robert Bridges, *Sonnet*, XVI.
[2] E. W. Hobson, *The Domain of Physical Science*, p. 475.

product of an unusually complex organisation of certain physical constituents and chemical changes. In what sense, then, can the modern biological view of the autonomy of life be said to make for the idea of a purposeful universe? Does it make it any the more possible for us to believe that the "heavenly plan":

Is hid in life within the creature's heart?

From the religious point of view, in seeking to understand the contribution which modern biology makes to religious belief, we may, I think, put the crucial question thus. (By the *crucial* question I mean the question that seems most appropriate at that point where the biological and the religious lines of enquiry cross one another.) The question is this. Can we detect in biological thought any movement parallel to what is more than a tendency in physics; namely, to describe matter in terms of energy, and to regard the mind which in faith constructs a trustworthy world of space, time and substance out of such raw material, as not merely working on its own, but really obeying an urge vaster than itself? In biology, the parallel tendency would be to describe the physical constituents and chemical changes of the organism *wholly* in terms of the Life that is observed in these.

Wholly in such terms; for the actual alternative is not the materialistic theory that Life is a product of physical and chemical changes, which is utterly discredited. In biology we are faced with another alternative, which at first sight seems to extricate us from materialistic ways of thinking. Is life to be recognised as a force among other forces, a kind of non-mechanical, semi-physical entity; not, it may be, produced by physical and chemical elements, but found in certain complex kind of "constellations"; making use of these, though not controlling them completely; only interfering in such a way as to render a purely mechanical interpretation of the organism impossible? Is there

a factor of purposiveness at work in the organism, supplementing the physico-chemical processes? This conception—"Vitalism"—really takes us no further on towards an interpretation of organic life in terms of purposiveness than the mechanistic hypothesis. We may take a simple illustration. Is it strictly true to say that "life" departs from the body of an animal at its death? At death we say, "Life has fled." When an animal is alive, it is an animal; when it dies, all that is left is not even a body but a corpse, a mass of rapidly decaying tissue. The living animal is a living organism. With the dying of the animal the organism ceases to exist. At death the organism is broken up into its constituent cells, which are also smaller complex organisms.[1] In the living animal these cells were built up into a unity; in the healthy animal they served the purpose of the whole organism. The life of the living animal is the whole animal, not simply a psychical force which inhabits the organism; the whole living organism, not merely some directive force within it, is necessary to interpret organic activity. Purposiveness is immanent in the organism as a whole; the existence of the organism is the whole expression of its structure and activities.

This would not be the moment to enter fully, even were I competent to do so, into the questions at issue between the "vitalistic" (or "neo-vitalistic") interpretations of the organism, and what has come to be known as the "biologistic," of which Dr J. S. Haldane is a very distinguished exponent. Driesch, the great exponent of neo-vitalism, says that Life (described in Aristotelian terminology as "entelechy") is in the organism as regulator or guide; but that we cannot "even in the slightest degree" tell how it is able to discharge its functions. If that be so, the "entelechy"

[1] "Death is certainly not the mere mechanical wearing out of the organic machine: for the organism . . . is no machine." J. S. Haldane, *Mechanism, Life and Personality*, p. 94.

is justly described by Bergson as merely "a label for our ignorance."[1] Professor Arthur Thomson defines the organism as for certain purposes a "self-stoking, self-repairing, self-preservative, self-adjusting, self-increasing, self-reproducing engine";[2] he has also used the symbol of a typewriter, "an extended hand" having inside of it "a human thought"; because of these qualities a typewriter is "a little like an organism." I cannot help feeling that such an interpretation involves the fallacy lurking somewhere in the answer given by a friend of mine to a rigid Sabbatarian, who accused him of breaking the Sabbath by riding a bicycle. His reply was that a bicycle was, after all, only "a rotatory pair of boots." Can we speak of "a self-stoking, self-repairing, etc. engine" as in any sense an engine at all? The truth we seek lies much nearer to hand in Dr Haldane's position that when we look at the phenomena of the life of any organism in their relation to one another, they are the expression of actively maintained specific and co-ordinated unity. This active maintenance and reproduction of specific structure is what we call Life; the physical and chemical constituents have no meaning at all, apart from Life.[3] An apt illustration may be found in the sentence, where the self-existent words disappear and we interpret it as a whole; in the picture, where the daubs of paint become part of a single unity.

This wholeness and unity of the organism is the significant fact. Is the wholeness and unity really a purposiveness that pervades and maintains the organism? A human body is an aggregate of smaller organisms, life-cells, but much more than an aggregate; for a change in one of these, or a lack of nutrition, or an

[1] It might also be described as a way of gathering up "all the difficulties into a bundle, and giving it a name."

[2] J. A. Thomson, *The System of Animate Nature*, p. 157.

[3] Cf. *Life, Mechanism and Personality*, p. 95; *The Sciences and Philosophy*, pp. 201 f.

injury will affect the whole larger organism that includes them. A lesion in a human brain-cell will make havoc of a whole personality; it may affect not only mind but character, and this fact need now no longer be regarded as an argument for materialism. An individual is an organism where every response to outward stimulus, every kind of behaviour that realises the response, every selection and adaptation, is seen to be for the good of the whole and not of the part. Moreover the individual organism obviously belongs to a wider whole, an environment with which its "life" is intimately connected.[1]

Human "purposiveness" is not merely self-interested, as even the purposiveness of lower organisms is not merely self-regarding. The individual cells in any higher organism do not normally live for themselves alone; the higher organisms are concerned with the propagation of the species and with care of the young. Human purposiveness is concerned with the same things and also with the preservation of instincts and thoughts that have a social value. The mind that thinks also seeks to communicate with other minds. We feel, and are sensitive to the presence and needs of others. We will, in order to carry out our purposes in an external world of men. We value tradition for the good of the whole. Religious belief itself is recognised by biologists like Mr Julian Huxley as a legitimate and necessary instrument of development in that racial purpose which determines progress; religion he regards as looking in the same direction as biological evolution, and speaks of religion as "an instrument for helping in the conquest of the new regions which lie open to man as individual and as species."[2] This at least means that religion has its roots in that wider and larger purposiveness inherent in the human organism; the place of religion in evolutionary progress becomes as necessary as the place taken by an ever-deepening

[1] Cf. J. S. Haldane, *Mechanism, Life and Personality*, p. 94.

[2] *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 291.

capacity for conceptual knowledge, by powers of memory and of storing up tradition, by an increasing emotional susceptibility. All of these, including religion, may be regarded, if only in the biological sense, as purposive expedients for " saving time " in the evolutionary process, in contrast with the wasteful and cumbersome methods of trial and error which are alone open to lower organisms. These " time-saving " expedients are able to set men free for an increasingly efficient control of the external environment by the organism itself.

The theory of the development of " time-saving," and " energy-saving," and " organism-saving " expedients in biological progress is an interesting one from our point of view. If the highest manifestation of religious experience that we know—communion with a personal God—ensures that the soul of man is " at home in the universe," at peace not with, but in his environment; that he is in living touch with the Divine Wisdom which " strongly and sweetly disposeth all things "[1]; acknowledging also as experienced truth, that " all things work together for good to them that love God "; that all moral barriers between God and man have disappeared;—may not such experience be regarded, even from a purely scientific point of view, as the greatest of all time-saving and energy-saving expedients in the biological process? If Christian religious experience rids men of the fetters of natural law, the burden of sorrow, the shame of sin; if these great internal revolutions in the human personality, set men free not only to control but to mould their environment,—why should they not be regarded as probably the highest manifestation of the Divine purpose in Nature? To feel after God, if haply we may find Him is a costly, and, regarded as an end in itself, a wasteful process.

[1] *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. viii, 1.

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE THE FINAL ADAPTATION

MODERN Science takes up a very different attitude towards the place of man, and human consciousness and values in the biological process, compared with that which seemed at first to be implied when Darwin began to teach that man is an integral part of the animal world. Biological Science regards the human organism as the crowning product of evolution, albeit a still unfinished product. The Darwinian "struggle for existence" is no longer a complete explanation of what has really happened; Darwin's theory that life produces an unlimited and fluctuating variety of types, and that the survival of types is determined by the action, on Malthusian principles, of a force that weeds out those types which cannot adapt themselves to their environment, does not explain all the facts. It is evident that there is a certain spontaneity in the organism itself; it develops, in the higher types, both an internal power of unified control—an independence of environment, and a power of creating its own environment. The organism is not only poured into a mould of environment, but also creates a mould appropriate to itself. It not only "repeats but replies." Moreover "Nature" does not do all the selecting. The organism fittest to survive is the organism which can single out special environments beneficial to itself as a whole, out of the general environment. It is also significant that organisms, in so acting, do not necessarily get in each other's way. "Two artists or two anglers may be in each other's way, but an artist and an angler will not

incommode one another."[1] The purposiveness of organisms is very different from the action of a blind force making use of a mechanism.

Living Nature is not careful merely of the type, and careless of the individual life. She endows the individual organism with a power to preserve its own existence, and that power, as the scale of being rises, is clearly a power other than physical. The evolutionary process in animate Nature, as Professor Arthur Thomson says, puts a premium on certain moral impulses, and even on the rudiments of these—on "good parents, good lovers, good kin, the self-forgetful and the self-subordinating, as well as on independent self-sufficiency."[2] Further, man is, of all creatures, the least well adapted physically to his natural environment; as a fruit of natural development alone, man is a "misfit" in the universe; his period of helpless and dependent infancy is longer than that of any other creature. His adaptation to environment is achieved mostly by the development of mental and spiritual qualities, which tend more and more to make him independent of it. He claims obedience from physical Nature, of which he himself is a part. Progress is increasingly determined by a spiritual effort of the individual organism itself; the individual becomes more and more fitted to partake *consciously* in what was once regarded as blind "natural" selection; he can control the movement of which he is also a product. He also partakes as an individual in a world of individuals, with whom he co-operates and shares experience. The steps on the way that point forward and upward signify the development in the organism itself of certain spiritual qualities. He becomes more and more independent of his physical environment; by inventing tools, by clothing his body, by learning the laws of health, by inventing machines to carry out the

[1] J. Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, p. 195 f.
[2] *Man in the Light of Evolution*, p. 27.

mechanical part of living for him. These expedients are the result of spiritual development, and they also leave man free to attend to the culture of spiritual activity. He becomes more and more consciously aware that this spiritual control must be exercised by the whole of his personal being, and that intellectual control alone spells disaster. The development of mere intelligence is the parent of pessimism and cruelty; our souls must be large enough for our bodies. The more deeply man comes to appreciate the highest values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, the more clearly does he know that of himself he cannot conserve them. He demands that these values should represent objective reality; that their presence in his soul must be in answer to their presence in the universe. "Only the thought of God as the Father whom Jesus knew can present man with an environment in which progressively fear is exercised, the sting of death removed, the surges of egotism subdued, the remorse of conscience assuaged, the claims of the intellect sufficiently satisfied."[1] Man as a spiritual being and as "the bearer of values" becomes a "misfit"[2] in the universe, without the assurance and power which religion brings.

Biological Science now clearly recognises that the purpose of life cannot be determined merely by observing the biological stages in the evolutionary development; it must also be determined by observing the special and particular spiritual value of what has been attained at and through these stages. It is significant that biological progress itself is no longer estimated on purely biological lines. This is certainly true of human progress; the physique of the genius or the saint may be poor, and often he has no descendants.[3] Can that purposiveness which is inherent in all lower

[1] H. H. Farmer, *Experience of God*, p. 181.
[2] I owe this conception to Mr Farmer (p. 49).
[3] B. H. Streeter, *Adventure*, p. 155.

organisms and may be detected in the inorganic world itself, be regarded as having declared itself for what it is, in the highest organism, man? Man is not the central aim of the whole process, which is "wider than the suns", but he is the supremely necessary goal; he is a being, in whom is born the capacity for recognising and conserving and increasing the value, meaning and significance of all things:

> Well, this cold clay clod
> Was man's heart:
> Crumble it, and what comes next?
> Is it God?[1]

At this point, Science leads us to the confines of its own peculiar territory. The complete valuation of human existence belongs to the domain of Religion. Physical Science recognises the sovereignty of Mind, but can pass no judgment on the objective value and content of our own mental states: biological Science observes life as a phenomenon, and is disposed to recognise that Life is not merely a *vis viva* inhabiting the organism, but is itself the organism. Life however can have no objective value, unless somehow it is possible to know, from within, what it means to be alive. The only organism, within the range of our perception, that is fully self-conscious and knows with an intimate knowledge what life means, is the human personality. In the end, I myself am the only being who knows, by immediate experience, what it means to be alive; I cannot know, by immediate experience, the mental states of anyone else; I can only, by an act of faith (or an act of "projection," if the psychological term is preferred) infer them. Human personality is conscious of itself; I do not mean merely that it can attend to its own mental states, but that it is immediately conscious of them. In other words, these mental states are experiences. Personality has been defined as "a system of experiences"; there is a unity in human personality

[1] R. Browning, *In a Year*.

which transcends the unity of an organism in the biological sense. It is a conscious unity; we seek to unify ourselves from within. The individual biological organism is still at the mercy of all the chances and changes of the natural system of things; death destroys it, although the type persists. The unity of the human personality is not felt as a wave on the sea of general existence, but as raised above the changing ebb and flow of natural phenomena. "Changes," says Professor Pringle-Pattison, "for the living being, are *experiences* by which it learns, by which its very nature is moulded."[1] It would not be thus possible to predicate "experience" of lower forms of life, unless we ourselves who make the assertion knew in ourselves what experience is. We interpret life in the lower organisms in terms of what we know in ourselves. Experience is the capacity for "learning," a capacity which characterises all living organisms and has been brought in the human personality to the highest point known. The capacity for learning is vastly increased when it becomes a capacity for conscious reflection upon and a unique power of remembering our experiences; also of determining the things it is most valuable to learn. We can both make use of tradition, and forecast the future. We have also the power of creating new experiences. This unifying and creative power of Personality moulds reality. It can, out of vibrations, create a whole world of sound and music; it can, also, out of all the hideous material of human physical suffering, create a world of beauty, as in the art of tragedy; or a world of self-sacrificing love, as in all forms of social service. As religious, human personality can also create a world of faith, where "there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." These worlds of experience are among the great achievements of the human mind.

[1] *The Idea of God*, p. 85.

No fully conscious personality, however, feels that it has achieved a unity of experience by its own unaided effort. The tragic thing in life is that our knowledge of ourselves only makes it plain that our personal unity is incomplete. We are at war with ourselves ; not war between spirit and body, but within the whole personality itself. We feel ourselves more than one person :

> Within my earthly temple there's a crowd :
> There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud ;
> There's one that's broken-hearted for his sins,
> There's one who, unrepentant, sits and grins ;
> There's one who loves his neighbour as himself,
> And one who cares for naught but fame and pelf—
> From much corroding care I should be free,
> If once I could determine which is Me.

Religious experience testifies that communion with God alone can resolve this internal disunity. Is this incompleteness and sense of need the crowning work of God, making us restless and incomplete till we find our rest and completion in communion with Himself ?

It is not possible to keep apart our philosophy of life and our religious experience ; to interpret our experience of the world in terms of matter and motion, and our experience of God in terms of religious values. "The Christian who thinks cannot keep God in his soul and leave Him out of his world."[1] All the more is this dualism impossible now that both physical and biological science find it necessary to maintain the supremacy of mind and purposiveness, if the natural is to be made intelligible at all. Is human personality the highest manifestation of Divine purpose in a universe which everywhere is pervaded by purpose ? The universe is not anthropocentric, in the sense that

[1] W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 472 ; cf. E. W. Hobson, *The Domain of Natural Science*, p. 466.

everything that happens in it is there, merely for the purpose of man's perfecting. Yet may it not be that the final Purpose of all things tarries, I will not say in its course—for course suggests time, and the Divine Purpose is timeless—tarries in its realisation, wherever man has not reached the level of conscious communion with God? When that level is reached we have passed from a natural into a supernatural world; we are in touch with another world of being; God is no longer merely an object of experience, but Himself an experience. God is the subject and we are the object. The whole evolutionary process is seen to be the means by which God is both communicating with us and making us capable of communion with Him. We do not find God in it, but God finds us; He finds us by continually making us restless till we find our rest in Him. The Christian position necessarily implies that for God it is not enough that there actually exist beings who are persons; His creative purpose is not realised until the relationship between Himself and them is a personal relationship. This seems to me the ultimate meaning of the characteristic demand of Jesus that we should visualise the purpose of God concerning us in terms of our own moral attitude to other persons; we, being evil, yet know how to give good gifts to our children. He also tells us that we are unable to come into a personal relationship with God, and He with us, until we have re-established a moral relationship with our enemies: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Otherwise God cannot forgive us, in other words restore us to a personal relationship with Himself. Jesus Christ has not taught us that we can obtain a complete concept of God from the analogy of human personality as we know it; but the burden of his message is that we are encouraged to think of God in personal terms, and to enter into a personal relationship with Him. The men and women who know God, trust Him, pray to Him, and seek to do His will in the

world, are not just so much precious salvage out of the ruin of humanity. They are the highest of all God's creatures, His fellow-labourers and fellow-creators in the Divine work of fashioning a world, according to His will and purpose. They represent the Final Adaptation to environment in a universe where God, Who is like Jesus Christ, is " all and in all."

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION WITHOUT REVELATION ?

Mr Julian Huxley has written a book entitled *Religion without Revelation?* He is, obviously, working with an outworn conception of Revelation.[1] He is quite evidently thinking of the so-called distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion. To him, belief in Revelation is a claim to possess complete enlightenment on the great problems of life and death, gained by some "non-natural" means; a kind of knowledge directly communicated by God Himself, which supplements the imperfect knowledge of God derived from the exercise of our reason. Such a conception of Revelation necessarily involves that scientific knowledge, where it conflicts with the immutable truths of religion, must always give way. This immutable Revelation of God is regarded as coming to us through certain selected persons, and at certain times. It came to us in its completest form in Jesus Christ, and has been preserved for us intact in the deposit of faith committed to the Church. There can be no doubt that the Christian conception of Revelation has often been so stated as to imply that all scientific knowledge, where scientific knowledge was recognised and valued at all, must, if it is to be true, confirm results already attained by other means; if it did not, then it must be false. Some still judge the validity of scientific truths by their bearing on religious truths like the "Divinity" of Jesus, or the "Inspiration" of Scripture, as defined

[1] As biologists seem so prone to do. Cf. Chapters XVII-XIX of Dr J. S. Haldane's *The Sciences and Philosophy*.

in the dogmas of the Church, which would all mean that scientific study is only tolerated if it verifies the conclusions of Church tradition. If the idea of "religion without revelation" is meant, as I think it is, to be a protest against such a denial of the autonomy of science, its effect is bound to be good. Revelation is not an infallibly communicated body of information regarding God, and His purposes; the receptiveness of the recipient of revelation is also a constituent.

The conception still exists to-day and is antagonised by Mr Huxley, that if we admit the possibility of modification or addition to the accepted body of Christian truth, the whole edifice of truth must be scrapped. That conception is indeed largely responsible for what has been gratuitous and unnecessary in the conflict between Religion and Science. The one is relying on infallibilities, which at their best say to men: "Come, live and think as we do, worship God in Christ as we do, and you will find that our dogmas are unshakable." The other says, in the voice of modern science: "We have reached as the result of free enquiry" (I quote almost *verbatim* from Mr Julian Huxley), "and of experimental test, a body of knowledge, of fact and explanatory theory, which can properly be regarded as established. By established, we do not mean that it is absolute or immutable—we expect modification and addition. But the additions and alterations will not involve the scrapping and rebuilding of the whole edifice. It will continue to be harmonious with itself, and to undergo a gradual evolution."

The Idea of Revelation, as a direct activity on the part of God who desires to make Himself known to man, must stand if Religion is to stand. At the same time, it ought to be clearly recognised that there is no fundamentally valid distinction between natural and revealed religion; all religion includes revelation and a conviction of the "Divine Aggression," and in all

revelation God employs natural means. Moreover the comparative study of religion, Biblical criticism, the science of psychology, have all emphasised the naturalness of the means by which the knowledge of God has come to us. The means are natural, because they are both human and historical; just because the means are natural, there is no absoluteness and immutability in Divine Revelation, which would exclude all possibility of modification or addition.[1] In thus laying stress on the naturalness of the means, we are not substituting a mere subjective process of discovery for the objective truth of revelation.

Here a word or two is necessary, touching the sense in which the Bible is regarded by Christian thought as the supreme revelation of God. The Bible is not the revelation, but its record. Now that we have ceased to approach the Bible with preconceived notions of the method of Revelation, we find illustrated more completely in the Scriptures than anywhere else, the naturalness of the means which Revelation employs. We have in the story of the Jewish nation, its stages arranged as modern scholarship has arranged them, the one continuous record in the world of the development of a religion.[2] The whole development takes place in the closest connexion with human experience and human history. Chiefly through the influence of the Prophets, the Jews were the only nation who were able to recognise the actual working of God in the history of all that happened to them. We have already seen that belief in one God is of much more than theoretic value; it not only enabled the Jew to recognise the purpose of God in the history of his own nation, but is the starting-point and basis of all vital religion; we

[1] See further discussion in pp. 236 ff., *infra*, of the Finality of Jesus Christ.

[2] I am greatly indebted in this section to *The Authority of the Bible*, by Professor C. H. Dodd.

cannot afford to neglect the literature of the people that gave Monotheism to the world. The Jewish prophet is an absolutely unique religious phenomenon. In the story of the development of religion as we have it in the Old Testament, the Hebrew prophet is, like man himself in the biological story, both a product of the natural movements of history, and also the supreme example in the evolution of religion, of the emergence of a being who is capable of estimating, directing, or opposing in the interests of real progress, the movement out of which he came. The authority of the Old Testament as revelation, rests almost entirely upon the authority of the Hebrew Prophet. The story of the movement as told in the Old Testament is largely the story of the nation written from the prophetic point of view. To the pious Jew, the knowledge of God that came through prophecy was like the knowledge of God borne to us through scientific discovery ; the utterances of the Prophets had much the same place in their conception of the story of the world, as the laws of Nature have for us ; the prophetic utterances were latterly codified and formulated as utterances of God Himself. Hence the often laboured anxiety, say in the Gospel of Matthew, to regard Jesus as foretold in prophecy. That anxiety was in order that Christianity might not be regarded as an upstart freak religion, but as the culmination of God's eternal purpose, and part of a well-ordered whole.[1]

It is only by recognising the prophet's place in his natural and historical environment that we can understand the " increment " or " lift " in the development of moral and religious thought which he represents. Some strong original impulse gave him the content of his message. Ecstatic mental conditions may have characterised the prophet ; but the distinction between true and false prophets in the Old Testament shows that some real divine power was regarded as present,

[1] Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 201.

which enabled men to distinguish between the spurious and the genuine in these abnormal mental states as channels of truth. An ecstatic condition was regarded as worthless by itself as a proof of divine inspiration; which is plainly the thought underlying the words of one of the greatest of the prophets, alluding to some of his rivals: "The prophets are mere wind, and the word is not in them."[1] The attempt to interpret Religion without Revelation becomes unscientific and breaks down when it faces Biblical History. Religion without Revelation, in this sense, would be like a biology which interpreted the emergent mutations of species as entirely and merely products of lower stages of life.

The Prophets have had successors in all ages since, and the validity of personal religious experience really stands or falls with the validity of the experience of the Prophet, that aristocrat of the spiritual life. The classical account of the prophetic experience is found in the Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament; in the New, the prophetic experience becomes the gift of the Spirit, and the heritage of every Christian believer. It has, however, been contended that the prophetic experience—which we must assume is communicable—has no standing, in its own right, within the world of religious certainty; that "the sublimest prophetic conception of the character of God is but the art-product of human phantasy, created to meet the need of human souls in the stress of their labours and anguish, born of the Will-to-Believe."[2] It is further contended that the prophetic vision or conception of God creates a moral gulf between the prophet and his God, a sense of unworthiness—"Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips." The vision is said to condemn its author; the sense of moral failure in its presence is said to reveal the prophet's incapacity to estimate its objective worth. Conscience, it is

[1] Jeremiah v. 13.

[2] J. MacMurray in B. H. Streeter, *Adventure*, p. 199.

contended (or so it seems), disables us from knowing for certain.

This conception of the nature of religious experience is based upon the hypothesis that the idea of the validity and authority of religious experience, regarded as autonomous, really rests on conscience ; that our moral and religious value-judgments are the judgments of an imperfect human personality, and therefore cannot carry with them the guarantee of their own ultimate truth. It implies that conscience gives content to the vision of God ; that, in the end, our affirmations of faith never go further than the expression of a mere individual interest or wish ; that conscience, in its own interest, demands a morally perfect Being. The truth is surely that the morally perfect Being, who confronts conscience, is experienced as morally hostile to the individual interest or desire ! This hostility is surely a sign of objectivity. Conscience itself is neither an instinct nor a product of social contact, but controls and judges both, as it stands outside both. It is capable of impartial and unhesitating criticism of the moral standards, both of the individual and of society. There is an objective quality in conscience, the organ of our moral value-judgments, enabling it to stand away from the life-process in the individual or in society, and to become aware of its success as goodness or failure as badness.[1] It does not merely originate the human desire for God ; in listening to the voice of conscience, men do not behave as though they were overhearing themselves speak. The objectivity of human values—even allowing for the necessity of educating them, and radically revising them in their concrete applications and general estimate of right and wrong, true and false, beautiful and ugly—must be maintained, unless the world as we know it is really nonsense. It is a strange thesis that, because we are sinful men, we cannot have certainty about God.

[1] Cf. W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Re-making*, pp. 99 f.

I have tried to vindicate the nature of religious experience as essentially a symptom and element of reality. As we have already seen, the authority of prophetic religion and of its communications to others, must not be isolated at the expense of depreciating the authority of institutional religion and of the appeal of the cult. Prophetic vision is, however, the predominant partner in that mass of ideas at work within us, that " sentiment," which we call religious experience. This exaltation of prophetic religion does not imply that all the Lord's people are prophets; but it does imply that the results of prophetic experience are communicable and authoritative for those who stand at a lower level of moral and spiritual insight and feeling than the prophet. Even the Johannine Christ says: " I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."[1] With this proviso, the experience of the prophet may be regarded as a normal and normative type of all religious experience. As Cromwell once said, the " prophet speaks things."

It is a first principle that the knowledge of God which Christianity affords can be neither valid nor authoritative, unless it comes to us as a direct revelation of God Himself. If God is our Father, we would not expect that He would leave us to infer this truth merely by observation of and reflection on the creation which is His handiwork. The experience kindled within us by prophetic personalities must become the truth known by immediate experience, or no truth at all. A father is not merely an object of experience to his child, but is himself the experience of fatherhood. In the early Church the belief in the Incarnation of God in Christ followed upon an immediate experience of the Fatherly love of God revealed in the historical personality of Jesus of Nazareth; in his life, death, and resurrection. It is an axiom that the Divine Father, being who He is,

[1] Cf. C. J. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relations of God and Man.*

must remain for ever unsatisfied, unless He is revealed to and in His children. God must have been willing to impart the knowledge, and must have taken means to do so ; we believe that He did so completely in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ ; if God is like Jesus Christ, we cannot conceive that such a truth should be discovered, independently of God Himself. There were, no doubt, traces of such a conception of God in pre-Christian Judaism ; it may be in other religions also. If so, they may be attributed to the same source ; but Jesus Christ was the author of that master-simplification of life, absorbing all other experiences of God, represented by his doctrine of " your heavenly Father." He was not only its author, but also its perfect expression in human life. In the process of filling in the content of the idea of God's Fatherhood his teaching and example are our supreme guides. If God is our Father it is an axiom that this master-truth must have been revealed ; in other words, it can only have come into men's hearts by the direct action and the willing co-operation of God Himself.

Must not we also recognise that all knowledge, if it is knowledge of the truth, of ultimate reality, has also come to us with the willing co-operation of God ? The secrets of Nature which the scientist penetrates and discloses cannot be regarded as wrung from a source that is hostile to the purpose of the seeking mind. The only intelligible view is that the universal Mind in Nature and the mind of the scientist co-operate in the work. Evolution is no mere blind process, nor a process content to be blind ; it produces both the world we know and the mind that knows. It has taken centuries, as has already been said, to produce such a world as that we live in, and also centuries to produce the kind of mind that can understand, control, and direct it. The old distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion laid down that, in the matter of religious knowledge,

one half of it was obtained by what was called the "unaided reason"; the other was "revealed," freely communicated by God Himself in order to make men sure of certain knowledge that otherwise would have been beyond their reach. A superior authority attached to the latter kind of knowledge.

It is strange that such a distinction should have been held, without its being perceived that it really makes it impossible to worship such a Divine Being. Are the truths of Science reached without the active co-operation of God? "It is not easy," says Professor Webb, "to suppose this of a God, such as . . . we could admit to be rightly called God at all. We could not allow the name of God to a being on whose privacy an Actæon could intrude, or whose secrets a Prometheus could snatch from him without his assent."[1] It is true that from a human personality we may gain some information about his most secret thoughts and purposes without his consent. The psycho-analyst gets data from his patient which the patient may freely give; but with the data, he also gets more than the patient is conscious that he is giving. We cannot imagine any knowledge of God, either in Nature or in human experience, which is not the result entirely of a conscious willingness on His part to reveal Himself.

Neither is it consistent with our conception of God as Father, that the Revelation of Himself even in Jesus Christ, should take the form of an infallible and immutable body of truth. Revelation does not imply an infallible and immutable body of truth. We have no right to deduce a failure of omnipotence, if the revelation of God is made to man's fallible reason, and if it has mingled with all the waywardness and ignorance of the human personality. If God is Love, it is characteristic of love not to protect, by external means, the human apprehension of it from moving in wrong directions.

[1] *Problems*, p. 27.

In addition, it must be pointed out that Revelation involves much more than the self-expression or self-manifestation of God. Self-expression need not have any ethical quality. To think of Revelation only as self-manifestation of God, leaves us with the inexorable questions of human pain, and all the crime and tragedy of the human story upon our hands.[1] In the Christian revelation of God, there is also the story of a passion that moves the shepherd to leave the ninety and nine, and go out to seek one that was lost. Christian revelation of God is not merely the removal of a veil from the face of a hidden deity. It is a revelation of God incarnate in a human Personality, actively engaged in the redemptive work of seeking and saving that which is lost, and Himself suffering at the hands of men. Jesus Christ is the supreme Revelation of God, because in his personality God and man are seen in complete and unbroken communion. Here we have the essential distinguishing mark between the Divine revelation in Nature, and the revelation of God in religious experience.

No sincere search for truth is the work of " unaided " reason. God is the predominant partner in every spiritual activity of the human personality, directed towards either finding or doing the truth. Yet there is an important difference between scientific knowledge and religious knowledge. The scientific man is concerned all the time with an object, or a related system of objects, between which there is a causal relation ; his own hopes and fears are not allowed to determine his knowing ; he has often to take into account facts which are contrary to his own hypotheses. The religious man, on the other hand, is concerned with his own experience of objects ; his environment becomes part of his whole consciousness ; actually arouses within him hopes, fears, and longings which clamour for satisfaction. When these are satisfied, as we claim they

[1] Cf. W. Morgan, *The Nature and Right of Religion*, p. 92.

are in the Christian revelation, the environment is no longer natural, but non-natural—supernatural if you will. We find ourselves in touch with another order of being; we possess an experience which we did not initiate. What distinguishes the revelation of God in Christ, from the revelation of God in Nature to the scientist or the artist, is just that, in the former, Christ is ever present in the experience of the believer. It is a revelation "through Jesus Christ." Not only does his mediation, felt anew by those who in every age are seeing the glory of God in the personality[1] of Jesus, give the revelation of God in all religions its final meaning and content. This historical Mediator alone, guarantees that Christianity is more than the self-manifestation of God, is a manifestation with a solely redemptive purpose, once and for all realised in actual history. How a single Character in history can be a final revelation of God, and have final authority for religious experience, will be the subject of our concluding chapters.

[1] "Face"; 2 Cor. iv. 6.

PART IV

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

I. The Fact of Christ
II. The Moral Authority of Jesus Christ
III. Jesus' Authority as a Teacher
IV. The Religious Authority of Jesus
V. Jesus and Apocalyptic Thought
VI. The Finality of Jesus Christ

CHAPTER I

THE FACT OF CHRIST

The same method of approach must be followed in our attitude to the authority of Jesus as we now follow in our estimate of the authority of the Scriptures. In estimating the authority of Scripture, we do not employ ready-made or traditional ideas, in accordance with what we conceive an instrument of God's revelation must be; for the facts, we go direct to the Scriptures themselves. Similarly, we do not begin with traditional interpretations of the person of Jesus. Jesus must have first made us feel his authority before we can begin to analyse it. The responsibility for obedience and belief rests with ourselves. To speak of Jesus Christ as the final authority is ultimately a private judgment of faith; not a judgment to which we are compelled by any theological presuppositions, by any coercion of tradition, or even by the massive authority of the *consensus fidelium*. It is a judgment which includes a sense of absolute trust. That trust is held on the same tenure as our trust in one another; the tenure is one of living and growing personal impression. "The impact of the authority of Jesus Christ may begin with outward historical evidence; but the authority cannot be held and extended on the basis of such evidence alone."[1] As we investigate the teaching methods, the thoughts, and the attitude of the historical Jesus towards the problems of his own day; or explore his own self-consciousness and his felt relation to God as these are presented to us in

[1] Cf. R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, p. 167.

the Gospels, our real interest is not to confirm the kind of authority we would expect from a Divine Being; rather to find out from the documents what actually was the authority and how it was mediated and exercised, which accompanied his words and works in the days of his flesh and afterwards in the Apostolic Church. The authority of Jesus Christ, if completely stated, really includes and brings to a head our treatment of the authority of the Church, of the Scriptures, and of individual religious experience.

In our investigation of the New Testament documents, it may seem hardly necessary to retraverse the road which has been described as leading " back to Christ," were it not that the movement " Back to Christ " has led to results, many of which were not foreseen and are somewhat startling. The fundamental motive of the movement was a certain impatience with theology; the fundamental idea was to get behind the decrees of Councils and the overlying conceptions of the apostolic writings; finally to reach the actual teaching of Christ himself, and the literally true historical events of his life. There also underlay the movement the presupposition that all that Jesus actually taught could alone be authoritative for Christian faith, and that all subsequent speculation and teaching must be tested by the mind and example of the historical Christ. The results so obtained neither yielded what was expected nor what was necessary in order to account for the facts of Christian history. The Jesus of the older Liberal theology could not have produced the mighty revolution of the Christian movement and the stupendous fact of the Christian Church. Moreover, not one portrait was thus obtained, but several; differing from one another in important aspects, so that we are bound to come to the conclusion that critics imported their own ideas and prejudices into the picture.

The intention was plausible, but the investigation laid bare some further very serious difficulties. Sane

criticism has now established that the Gospels themselves are permeated by an atmosphere of theological interpretation. In a sense, critics of the "back to Christ" school mistook the direction in which they were going; in proceeding from Epistles to Gospels they were not moving back to Christ, but forward. The Christ of the Fourth Gospel is now seen as a thorough-going reinterpretation of Jesus of Nazareth, based no doubt on actual history, but a development of the Pauline cosmic Christ, in response to a new environment of thought encountered in the first contact of the Christian mission with the pagan world.[1] But the element of theological interpretation is by no means absent from the Synoptic Gospels. For one thing, they are partly built up on the basis of *Form-Geschichte;* narratives that owed their form to the creative and moulding pressure of the thought and the needs of particular Christian communities. The whole story of the Gadarene demoniac, to take an extreme case, may indicate that a popular local myth has been adapted to the story of Jesus; traditions of Old Testament miracles reappear in the story of Jesus; the Birth stories in Matthew and Luke spring in all probability from some Palestinian source, of which neither Paul nor the Johannine writer seem to know anything. Other influences are present, amongst which the dominating one is the Pauline thought. Even the Marcan Gospel is affected by the conception of Jesus as "the Son of God," who not merely overthrows the demon world as Messiah was expected to do, but who is recognised by the demons both as an enemy and as "Son of God": "What hast thou to do with me, Jesus, thou son of God, most High? I adjure thee, by God, torment me not." In these words there

[1] I have elsewhere dealt with the subject in *The Fourth Gospel: its Significance and Environment;* and in *The Fourth Evangelist: Dramatist or Historian?*

[1] Mark v. 7.

speaks the voice of the Pauline "prince of the power of the air," of "spiritual wickedness in high places," of the demonic rulers of this world who crucified the Lord of glory.[1] It may also be contended that the Nature-miracles are described as the work of One who is already on the throne of the universe. "Even the winds and the sea obey him" has already a liturgical sound, and suggests the cosmic Christ of Paul. There are those who might not be disposed to concede so much; but they are, I think, bound to admit that even in the Synoptic Gospels we see Jesus as the disciples came ultimately to see him, from the vantage-ground of an experience of the Resurrection, the Spirit, and the living Church.

In addition, it would be generally admitted that the stories of Jesus and his sayings are also written down, indeed in many cases owe their preservation, both to apologetic needs of the day—in order to meet perplexities of conduct and worship current in the communities—and also to a homiletic interest. The homiletic and hortatory interest shows itself in the fact that so many of the sayings of Jesus are preserved, by which the conscience of the primitive Church was accustomed to judge its own faith and conduct. Geographical considerations also played their part; by the time the Gospels were written, the new outburst of spiritual energy had carried the Christian message far and wide; Rome, Antioch, Ephesus had begun to make their own impression on the form of the message and to determine the selection and interpretation of the material for a life of Jesus. The rudiments of the Christian Church as an institution had also appeared; very many to whom the message came with power, were influenced not of necessity by first-hand knowledge of the actual events of Jesus' life and death, but by accounts and interpretations of these given by the Christian apostles and preachers, and current in the various communities. As eye-witnesses died the events

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

themselves tended to fade out of memory; hence we have a gospel like Luke's, expressly intended to give an account of "the things fully established among us," and also to give opportunity to catechumens like Theophilus[1] to study for themselves, in narrative form, the facts given them already by oral instruction. Moreover the cult of Jesus, the impression produced by the Christian worship and sacraments must have been to many their first point of contact with the Christian faith. Faced with all these developments in our attempt to reach the words of Jesus and the actual events, we are also confronted with the serious difficulty of distinguishing between interpretations and the original material.

The attempt to disentangle interpretation and fact, while it brings into clear relief the personality of Jesus, yet reveals as clearly that Jesus was the child of his own time; his intellectual equipment was that of his time; he had a certain kind of education; he belonged to a certain social order; he was of the country and not of the town. This is a very important, if at first somewhat disconcerting fact, in view of the question of his authority. We find that it is no longer possible to apply the moral teaching of Jesus, spoken in utterly different social and political conditions from our own, literally to our own time. In discovering the historical Jesus we have also encountered the difficulty of fitting him into our own time. The moral and social problems of our day go far beyond anything contemplated in his. The political, social and economic ideas in the mind of Jesus, and his use and criticisms of these are relative to his time. His utterances regarding the civil powers, and his teachings on wealth must always be interpreted with contemporary ideas in view. Whenever we come face to face with the moral teaching of the historical Christ, we seem to hear a voice that says: "It is expedient for you that I go away." But

[1] Luke i. 4.

who shall come in his stead? The Johannine writer correctly describes the final legacy of Christ as the gift of the Spirit that leads into all the truth. As we assimilate his spirit, we are conscious of a moral obligation and imperative. His is no external authority. External and infallible authority renders men impotent, both intellectually and morally. Christ's authority, even more in his death than his life, is invincibly compelling; never more than when disobedience makes our consciences ashamed. His is also a redemptive authority, which delivers from inward conflict, breaks down rebellion, and renders us free to obey. Anything further removed from an external, autocratic, infallible authority cannot be conceived than the authority of Jesus. His one aim seems to be to create in his disciples a moral and religious consciousness such as he himself possessed. "Why judge ye not of yourselves what is right?" The authority of Jesus is one that commands because it also creates, both the power to interpret and the ability to obey his teaching: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The power to interpret the teaching of Jesus would, alone, be an intolerable burden. No great teacher has dared to lay such burdens of conduct and vision on his followers as Jesus; none has nevertheless dared to say, like him: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The easy yoke is the power he gives to obey. His authority is strengthened, not weakened by the fact that he does not ask his disciples merely to take his word for the truth of what he utters. He both rejects tradition and borrows from it; he selects, and what he selects he also transforms; moreover he does so on principles peculiar to himself among the world's teachers. He is governed throughout by a religious interest, and is directed by his own consciousness of God. He does not deprive his disciples of the power of selecting and rejecting; he invites them also to select and retain, and if need be to reject, elements in any tradition, moral or religious, to which

they are heirs. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

The demand even for an infallible Christ in the sense that he reveals to us a special body of truth, beyond the reach of enquiry or intellectual reconstruction, and absolves us from responsibility for our own belief, is simply to deny that the idea of evolution is applicable to the Christian faith. It is to deny the right of free enquiry and to forget that the authority of the Christian message is essentially the authority of an invitation, a gospel which is meant to be freely accepted. We are in search of an authority like the authority of light falling on the eye, but not making it impossible for me to see wrongly; of duty falling on the conscience, but not preventing my taking a wrong turning; of beauty falling on the imagination, yet not making me an artist or a poet. The Christian message comes to us with a supreme and final authority, fulfilled and realised in Christ; but like all true and lasting authority which one personality exerts upon another, it is not imposed as eternal and infallible; it imposes itself. We need no other credential than Christ himself. The basis of Christ's authority is not a prior belief in his divinity or his miracles, but the impression which his Personality makes upon us. If there ever should come a time when Jesus ceases to be this Personality whose impressiveness grows with the centuries; commanding men by the depth and purity of his teaching, and subduing them by the power of his own faith and love, in all their attitude towards God and man; kindling faith in response to his own; creating the kind of men who are able to obey, and to interpret for themselves both his person and his teaching;—it may with confidence be said that it would be useless to appeal to the miraculous, either in his person or in his works.

CHAPTER II

THE MORAL AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

We may consider the Authority of Jesus under three aspects: His Moral Authority; His Authority as a Teacher; His Religious Authority.

These three divisions will be found more or less to overlap. The teaching of Jesus never separates morality and religion, but closely interrelates them. His authority as a Teacher is also conditioned and so far, limited by his sense of vocation. His vocation is primarily to convey his own experience of God to men; not to give detailed guidance and information on every subject. In this chapter we shall consider his Moral Authority.

I

The moral authority which Jesus seeks to convey to men is ultimately not his own, but "the will of Him that sent me." At the same time, the most striking feature in the moral authority of Jesus is the way in which he seeks to attach men to his own person. He detached some from their secular occupations, and on occasion demanded the renunciation of earthly goods, and earthly ties. I believe that, while on earth, he demanded this of all who would be his most intimate and most efficient disciples, of those on whose faith he would found his Church. We immediately lay stress on the impossibility of such a demand under our present social conditions. From one point of view that objection is valid; but on the other hand no actual

condition of things as they are, can ever be felt as permanent where the teaching of Jesus is understood, and its authority felt. No family life is secure from conflict if Jesus is to be obeyed; he comes not to bring peace, but a sword; he comes "to cast fire upon the earth." He did say, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"; yet it is plain that on other occasions he idealises human affection, and sees in it a symbol and indeed a means of understanding the mind of the Father towards us: "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your heavenly Father!" We have also the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The value he places elsewhere on family life and family affection only brings into greater relief the cost entailed in actually leaving all, in order to be attached to himself, and to be his immediate disciple. We lay stress on the renunciation; the real stress should be laid on the value he gave to attachment to his own person and on the amazing sacrifice he unhesitatingly demanded. No moral teacher, however much his personality may still be necessary to the understanding of his teaching, ever placed himself in such a position of decisive supremacy as Jesus. "He knows no more sacred task than to point men to his own person."[1] Here is a fact about the historical Jesus before which we pause. Meantime, it is enough to say that it arises out of his sense of unique relationship to God, and of his unique sense of mediatorship between God and man.[2]

Shall we therefore say, if we are convinced of this unique relationship to God, that all the teaching of Jesus must on that account be obeyed without question or challenge of thought? This is to forget that primarily, *Jesus did not ask to be obeyed, but to be followed.* Therein lies the secret of interpreting and obeying the moral precepts of Jesus. That following,

[1] W. Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 76.
[2] Cf. pp. 209 f., *infra.*

as Dr T. R. Glover puts it, is not only a following up hill and down dale, along streets and roads; it is to follow his thoughts also, in all their flux and reflux. Any other kind of obedience issues in sheer legalism. We cannot codify the teaching of Jesus, put it under headings such as: Family duties, Social obligations, War, Sex questions, and so on. That is the easier way, but it is the wrong way; it may economise thought, but it does not conduce to non-legal obedience. It may indeed be questioned whether we really have any right to speak of "the ethic of Jesus" at all. Just as we have seen that Jesus is not deeply concerned with the outward organisation of his church, but with the spirit that shall animate it; so we may claim that he is not primarily concerned to lay down a programme of human conduct, but to create the kind of moral personality that knows what to do, and when and how to do it. The general significance of the Temptation is that Our Lord refused to obey the calls for leadership that reached him out of the great variety of immediate problems—social, political, and economic—, of which the atmosphere of his time was full. "Who made me a judge and divider over you?" It is impossible to think of him as indifferent to these voices; rather as acutely sensitive; for otherwise, the Temptation would have had no moral reality. He actually "emptied himself," renounced countless opportunities of social service, in order that he might be free to carry out his supreme vocation. That vocation was to make it possible for God to have His way with men's hearts. Pater describes his Marius, who had witnessed the brutalities of the gladiatorial combats, as feeling that "what was needed was the heart that could make it impossible to witness all this, and the future would be with the forces which could beget this heart."[1] The religion of Jesus was from its very beginnings in his own consciousness a religion capable of begetting such

[1] *Marius the Epicurean*, II, p. 242.

hearts. The Johannine writer, while he has given us very little detailed teaching of Jesus, has done something much greater and much more significant in his reinterpretation of Jesus Christ for a pagan world; he has emphasised that individual change of heart, described by him as "birth from above." The teaching of Jesus is not a social programme; it is a power that can create in all ages the heart which not only is deeply sensitive to moral wrong, but is actually the instrument whereby God accomplishes His purpose of banishing it.

II

It is customary to say that Jesus merely laid down precepts or principles, and left men, under the guidance of his Spirit, to apply them. This is not strictly true. If such sayings as "Resist not evil," "Give to him that asketh thee," "Love your enemies" had been merely abstract precepts, we may be sure that they would have made no more impression on the popular mind than abstract precepts do to-day. They were ordinary minds whom Jesus addressed, and great teachers speak to such minds in the concrete. It is striking to note how many of Jesus' sayings are not merely precepts, but concrete applications of them. He does apply his own teaching; he applies it to the consciences of men in concrete forms suggested by the actual social and political situation of his own day. Jesus does not live and think apart from the actual world of his day. He lives with vigorous intensity in particular historical situations and deals with issues which the people of his own time had to face. He went down to the very roots of these. His teaching is suggested by the facts of the moment, but in reach and power goes far beyond them. The idea that his gaze is fixed all the time on the long vista of succeeding ages is a profound mistake; his detachment and refusal to become involved in current politics and social problems are due simply to

a "profound simplicity that comes only of complete mastery of the problem."[1] Take, for example, the words, "He that will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." There, Jesus certainly did not mean those casual trials we have to bear, and he also did not mean that we must practise daily austerities; Luke has added a word to the original saying, "Let him take up his cross *daily*." Jesus is actually speaking of the beam laid on the shoulders of the criminal on the way to die. When we try to interpret Jesus' sayings, apart from the historical, concrete situation, we always tend both to blunt their edge, and to miss their universal meaning. Jesus actually meant that in following him, there was a risk that some of those who were loyal might also suffer crucifixion. There is a universal meaning in these words, but we have not always either the courage or the faith to discover it, or discovering, to obey. If we were in more deadly earnest about the application of Christ's teaching in social, political, and international matters, or in the pursuit of truth, we might discover anew what the danger of modern crucifixion means, and feel the temptation to moral cowardice in its sternest and most grievous form.

"He that smiteth thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also," is a tolerably concrete application. This concrete application, made by Jesus himself, gives the principle involved bodily shape and form, and therefore makes it intelligible, not only to the people who heard him, but to us. We may be startled by the form into understanding of the content; led to obey by disobeying his words. We have other ways of inflicting personal insults, and we have other ways of showing our resentment of personal injuries, than by a slap on the cheek. The gracious interest of Jesus in all kinds of humanity, is such that he did pause to

[1] C. H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible*, p. 234.

understand the feelings of the kind of men who slap each other's cheeks, and whose cheeks are slapped. It is also remarkable that he concentrates attention first on the way in which the injured man behaves, and on his feelings, rather than on the action of the aggressor. Therein Jesus exercises a more daring authority than any moral teacher before him. The really important thing is that Jesus claims an authority over the inner life and thoughts of men, which is new and startling. It was true of men then, as now, that the region of the soul where personal injury is felt and rankles—there are more refined forms of insult in our day, and the acuteness and area of sensitiveness are greater—is a region which the natural man claims as peculiarly sacred to himself, the region of personal honour and personal feeling. Jesus fearlessly invades this domain.

Again, the concrete form of the saying shows that it is not resentment which Jesus condemns, nor even the pugnacious instinct, but resentment quickening pugnacity into expression by seizing blindly the very instrument that has been employed against us. "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Jesus certainly does not mean that personal insult should pass unnoticed and unregistered in the heart. The man whose heart is of this kind is incapable of any kind of passion. Something is to be done about the injury. It is surely a first principle of Christian conduct that we have no moral right to allow non-resistance to be mistaken for apathy, cowardice, or folly. We have a responsibility for the moral ideas we convey to our fellows. Jesus does not deal thus authoritatively with our feelings of resentment only to slay them. He does not deal with the deep-rooted pugnacious instinct only to condemn it. He claims lordship over our feelings because he can transform and use them for the advancement of his kingdom. He can turn them into a creative attitude of soul, by means of which, as an American philosopher has put it, "a 'new idea' is conveyed to

the wrong-doer."[1] "*Nemo me impune lacessit*" need not be the motto of a mere swashbuckler. We are, as injured parties, commanded to make an attack on the most inward thoughts of our adversaries, but we must have the right weapons for this purpose. Jesus does not teach men to abjure weapons, but to make the right choice of weapon. Sometimes silence may be the instrument, sometimes rebuke, sometimes patient endurance, or even force, in order that your opponent may be disposed to listen to the new language. In order that we may be free to choose the right weapon, Jesus seeks to enable us to be in control of our inner life; and inasmuch as our aim must be to convey a new idea to our opponent, our thinking must be free. "Why judge ye not of yourselves what is right?" Whatever the instrument employed, Jesus says distinctly that blind pugnacity — retaliation —, which simply employs the weapon of the enemy on the instinct of the moment, is a sin against man and God. We must not allow our enemy to "judge" for us. Something has to be done, some choice of weapon made that will *cost* in thought and self-control. The other cheek must be turned. Something must be done, but it will not infallibly secure the injured man against fresh insult or failure. He must still expose a surface of his being as sensitive as that which was injured at the first. He must go on bearing the pain and cost of his choice of weapon, in the faith that in the end victory, not for himself but for God, will be secured. It is success for the Kingdom, not for any individual moral effort that Jesus promises. Jesus is above all concerned, not with mere outward behaviour as such, but with the kind of ideas we convey one to another.

This creative lordship of the feelings of men is a new prophetic note in the world, and it is closely connected with that sense of the unique value of attachment to

[1] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Re-making*, p. 352. I owe a good deal in this section to Part VII of this book.

his person. If the concrete form of his sayings fixes him firmly down as the child of a particular age and social environment, this assertion of control over the inner motives of men makes him universal.

We are not intended to make a merely legalistic use of his words. Let me take another example. He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." The concrete form clearly forbids any accumulation of wealth, but it also reveals that Jesus speaks to men whose idea of accumulating it was to dig a hole in the ground or in the floors of their houses, and to bury it; to those whose only idea of accumulating wealth was to hoard. Such a hoarder seems to us a somewhat contemptible kind of person, but Jesus is deeply concerned with and interested in such people. The motives of such action are selfish covetousness and anti-social acquisitiveness. We have discovered other ways of amassing and hoarding wealth, but the feeling and ambition may be the same. That feeling and ambition is what he emphasises, and, if we remember his passion for the concrete, there was no other way of condemning it, save by forbidding all accumulation of wealth. The men of his day knew no other way, and Jesus did not come in order to teach men the principles of political economy. It is beside the point to say that we believe that, in obedience to his spirit, we have discovered ways of making money and of accumulating it, so that others than ourselves may benefit, and the wealth itself become an instrument in God's hands. Jesus is not concerned to create or to condemn a particular social organisation. No doubt his eschatological ideas had their effect here. When we realise, however, that Jesus is concerned with fundamental principles of conduct, to act as though the forms of society were fixed in the first century, is not only to deny social evolution and to forget that Jesus left the current apocalyptic pregnant with a force destined ultimately to transmute it; but also to deny the process of creating a power of

independent ethical judgment, which is precisely the aim of Jesus. Furthermore, obedience to a mechanical social or economic authority of this kind, codified in the teaching of Jesus, would rob our action of all moral value and effectiveness.

III

Jesus is the universal Conscience of mankind. How has he become so ? Even at this time of day, we must beware of the deceptively simple thinking which deduces the supreme moral authority of Jesus from his unique miraculous power. The gospel miracles are matters of historical evidence, but evidence of moral truth appeals to conscience ; moral must not be confused with historical evidence. As it has been put by Dean Rashdall : " It wants some poetic capacity to appreciate Shakespeare, but not nearly so much as it took to be Shakespeare."[1] Our varying degrees of moral capacity are sufficient to enable us to appreciate the surpassing moral capacity of Jesus ; to give him in morals as in religion the name that is above every name, and to submit ourselves to a Conscience that imposes itself upon us as uniquely and exceptionally developed. Jesus always appeals direct to the free and independent conscience of men.

Jesus makes a far deeper and much more extensive moral demand than any the natural man has courage to propose. He sums up all his moral teaching in the command, " Thou shalt love." He means, let us repeat, what he says. It is not strictly true to say that on the lips of Jesus there is no imperative mood to the verb " to love." " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is an inescapable imperative. All moral systems seek to regulate men's behaviour, and to control their actions ; perhaps not till we encounter this command do we sufficiently realise the significance

[1] *Conscience and Christ*, p. 23.

of that commonplace in the interpretation of Christianity, that it deals with feelings first. When Jesus says, "Love your enemies," we are apt to say that love, being a spontaneous feeling and having no value unless it is spontaneous, cannot be commanded; or we blunt the point of the imperative by interpreting it merely as enjoining a certain course of external action and attitude towards our enemy. We must never forget that acts done out of a sense of duty may really increase the feeling they are intended to express; and that the way in which we school ourselves to behave towards an enemy may actually bring to life the proper feeling: nevertheless, we cannot escape the moral pressure on any feelings of aversion or resentment we may have towards our enemy, by saying that it is impossible to have an affection for him, such as we have towards our own friends, or kith and kin. We are not bidden to be affectionate, but to love. Love, as we have already seen, is not a single emotion but a system of emotions, a complex of feeling, a "sentiment" in the technical language of modern psychology.[1] "Love" has become, in ordinary thinking, exclusively connected with certain "tender" forms of the sentiment of love. Love manifests itself in different ways, according as it is sex-love, friendship, blood-relationship, or love to an enemy. "An emotion," says Thouless, "is an actual experience, a sentiment is only a disposition towards experiences of a certain kind."[2] The Psychologist, like the Physicist, nowadays does not hesitate to call the poets to his aid when he seeks to widen his concepts. Shand, for example, who is responsible, as already stated, for the notion of the "sentiment,"[3] quotes Swift:

> Love why do we one passion call
> When 'tis a compound of them all?

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[1] Pp. 53 ff., *supra*.

[2] *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 98.

[3] P. 55, *supra*.

> Where hot and cold, where sharp and sweet
> In all their equipages meet ;
> Where Pleasures mixed with Pains appear,
> Sorrow with Joy, and Hope with Fear.

Jesus means what he says when he teaches, " Love your enemies." Unlike the prophets that were before him, he deliberately surveys not the single emotion, but the sentiment of love, which organises many varied emotions. He teaches men how to organise their emotions. To him, Love is the great organiser of emotion ; " the bond of perfectness," as Paul calls it. To organise means also to select and to exclude certain passions on moral grounds. Love is not, as Swift says, a " compound " of *all* the passions. Some are excluded, as in 1 Cor. xiii. 4 ;[1] those that Swift actually mentions in his last line are always included in the sentiment of love. Anger, also, is not to be excluded. A vision of Jesus, with " eyes like a flame of fire " has been preserved, with an awesome reverence, in Christian tradition.

Granting the variety of emotions within the sentiment of love and our power of exclusion, we must hold to the Christian position that the feeling of hatred with which you may regard your enemy, however it may be controlled and suppressed, has a real effect on your outward attitude towards him. That feeling must be removed. Hatred, or even prejudice, is also a " sentiment," and even a bitter rival to love. It also organises our emotions, in wrong directions. It can make us blind to those elements of lovableness which may be in a man's character, blind also to the gateways that may be open for the entrance of the " new idea " into his heart. " Love your enemies " is indeed a hard saying, and most of us can only begin by so regulating our outward conduct towards our enemy as to avoid retaliation, or action that would deepen the enmity. The best way to create the Christian feeling is often to act deliberately on certain principles : but Jesus knows

[1] Cf. p. 55, *supra*.

well that love cannot be produced by direct action of the soul upon itself; and his command implies consciousness of a divine creative power which he can convey. There is a certain malicious wisdom in the child's saying: "A soft answer turneth away wrath, and besides, it makes them far madder." Some kinds of soft answer often do. We all know the effect even on ourselves of the effort to behave towards your neighbour, "as if" you loved him; it may suggest the fisherman's motto, "Impale a worm as though you loved it"; not all the controlled politeness in the world can conceal from a sensitive enemy that treacherous "as if." In the region of the "as if," that region of polite pretence, Jesus bids us feel the pressure of authority on our consciences, even if we only begin by careful regulation of our conduct; for outward behaviour has a real effect on the spirit within. It is not enough to say that a command to love is impossible; in Christianity, it is the impossible that happens; we cannot escape from the full authority of Jesus by interpreting his commands as commands of outward attitude and restraint of natural passion; or as obeyed in an effort to behave towards your neighbour *as though* you loved him. We are always tempted, in Professor Hocking's words, to "pour back into behaviour that which the new idea proposed to lift out of it"; which is indeed to put new wine into old bottles. The result is a disastrous explosion. The attempt to pour Jesus' commandment of love into the old behaviouristic bottle of an expansive amiability, or a studied politeness, or sportsmanlike conduct, as though these were sufficient to contain it, has been responsible for many disastrous explosions in social relationships. It is responsible for a good deal of Labour trouble in the world to-day. There is such an affection as loving with the mind—the imaginative feeling that enables us to see into the minds of others; even to state to ourselves their point of view and to understand their motives; to treat men as ends

and not as means. Many a conference between employer and employed has broken down, through inability on both sides to appreciate the other's point of view. The inability is the fruit of a lurking sentiment of class antagonism, blind distrust, or suspicion.

IV

What has been said may shed further light on what is meant by saying that Jesus, in the region of moral authority, does not ask to be obeyed but to be followed. "Follow me." The originality of Jesus' summary of the moral law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself," is not exhausted when we point out that while these commands are taken from different portions of the Mosaic Law, the originality consists in selecting just these two and giving them the pre-eminence; in selecting, and ignoring a great deal else. There is a deeper depth of originality than that. To say "Peace" to a storm of wind and wave, is not more daring than to say "Thou shalt love" to a resentful or angry heart. That quietly assumed claim to deal with personal and private sentiments, and to be their Lord, and to mediate the power of their re-making, inevitably makes us say: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and waves of hatred and malice are bidden obey him?" A greater than Buddha, Confucius, or Solomon is here. Whose is this authority also, which, the closer we follow him and realise that he means what he says, makes us so deeply ashamed? We never recognise his full authority until then. "Follow me," he says; and there are moments when in order that we may go further we stop, and say: "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me." The authority of Jesus not only calls us out, but calls us in. "Come unto me."

No mere words, not even Jesus' own words, are able

to establish his moral authority over us. They draw forth from us both "yes" and "no"; but a "yes" and a "no" which have another kind of content than that which is found in our assent to or dissent from a logical proposition; or our approval or disapproval of a suggested design for a new house. There is an emphasis in the "no" which immediately ought to make us suspect that we are rejecting more than a legal proposition. We are rejecting him. The attack which Jesus makes on the citadel of feeling, brings us inevitably into a personal relationship with himself. The command, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," cannot be obeyed merely by taking up a certain practical attitude towards our neighbour. The words, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," cannot suggest a merely expansive, beaming, uncritical attitude towards humanity. In the same sentence the rain that descends on just and unjust alike is mentioned. This does not mean, of course, that moral distinctions do not exist for God; but that God's love is a creative and fructifying power in good and bad alike. This creative power Jesus is conscious of mediating to men, transforming feelings of dislike and hatred in the just, and fostering justness in the unjust. To be perfect as God is perfect means that our moral antagonisms remain antagonisms, but are free to choose their own weapons. Our natural pugnacity goes into training, and emerges as something far more dangerous to evil and evil-doers—Love that does not count the cost. Jesus deals with the human instincts in the Sermon on the Mount in a lordly, creative, and sovereign way. He himself is already what he demands. His is the authority which speaks from its own experience. The authority that speaks from experience is ever the highest of all.

Because of this experience, perfectly realised in himself, Jesus claims to be the Judge of men. In that claim we reach the peak of his moral and spiritual

authority. Contemporary eschatological traditions may have had their share in moulding his words in his picture of the Final Judgment in Matthew xxv., but Jesus has entirely remoulded the tradition. In words like these, we reach the climax of his moral authority. He is conscious that he himself in his attitude towards men is the final embodiment of the Divine Love; by that Love, and by its presence in heart and life, men are judged. The vision of Matthew xxv. stands for the final unveiling of the issues of a life completed by men on earth, however the picture may be cast in poetic imagery. I do not think that the naked and the hungry and the destitute and the prisoners are types only of physical distress. They are types of moral and spiritual distress also. In this parable, we find the fullest exposition of the meaning of the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and a description of the final issue of lovelessness. This claim to be Judge also betrays a consciousness in Jesus himself that his own love represents the ultimate reality in the universe, and that in the presence of such love, no lovelessness can live.

CHAPTER III

JESUS' AUTHORITY AS A TEACHER

UNDER this heading, I shall deal briefly with the problem raised by the undoubted fact of the limitation of our Lord's knowledge. As Canon Streeter has lately again pointed out, Jesus is to be regarded as a "specialist in religion and morals," not in science. His teaching deals with God and with human conduct. It is really beside the point to assert, that final authority cannot be ascribed to Jesus because there are whole tracts of life regarding which his intellectual knowledge is that of his own day. The supreme values in life are Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, and no one would now dream of quoting Jesus as the final authority on Science or Art. His authority only comes into conflict with the authority of the scientist or the artist, when the latter stray out of their own sphere, and begin to utter dogmatic judgments on what are really religious and moral questions. His moral authority is also felt when the scientist seeks only fame, or the artist popularity. Both intellectual and æsthetic activity are morally conditioned. Moreover Jesus cared supremely for truth. He might even be regarded as "the true leader of the intellectuals themselves."[1] He criticised the Old Testament freely. His dialectic powers speak for themselves.[2] He accepted truth from whatever quarter it came, and inaugurates the true scientific spirit of self-suppression in his unprejudiced praise of the hated Roman, the despised Syro-Phœnician, and

[1] J. Ernest Davey, *Our Faith in God*, p. 118.

[2] The account of his dialectic in John viii. owes much to the mind of the Evangelist and the attitude of the early Church towards its Jewish opponents.

the heretic Samaritan. He is the real Teacher of teachers. His teaching method is supreme. All his teaching is couched in such a form as to provoke thought, and to engage our minds with a promise of reaching truth. He cared also supremely for beauty; otherwise, his parables, the style of them, the reserve, the beauty of them, would not be what they are. He says things in the most perfect way, which is art. "Consider the lilies," in itself, is an appreciation of natural beauty quite original in Jewish thought. Other similar utterances of his may have remained for ever unrecorded. It is on record that the beauty of an act of homage towards himself deeply stirred his soul: "She hath wrought a beautiful work on me." We believe also that Christ's view of the universe, and of its impact on the lives of men, expressed as it is with an underlying basis of contemporary scientific conception, is nevertheless intellectually as well as spiritually satisfying. He sees God's rule everywhere; he really says intuitively the last word about the universe, denying all mechanistic philosophies, when he declares that it is a place where stones are not given for bread nor scorpions for fish. We cannot accept the dictum, that in the acquirement of scientific knowledge we are entirely left to our own resources, and that the authority of science is simply the authority of facts. That utterance is based upon the traditional mischievous distinction between natural and revealed knowledge. We have the implicit authority of Jesus for saying that the Spirit of God is at work in every sincere search for truth, and in every discovery of the nature of ultimate reality.

At the same time, we have no right to claim the final authority for Jesus on subjects which he did not profess to teach. The popular scientific belief in Jesus' day on the origin of disease, was that it was the work of demons; on it was superimposed the conviction that sin and suffering were cause and effect. There can be no doubt that Jesus shared the belief in demonic

agency, although, as in all beliefs that he shared with his own time as a child of his time, he shows a striking independence of thought. He consistently opposed the idea that all disease was the result of Divine punishment of sin.

The questions that are raised by the discovery that Jesus was the child of his own time will reappear in a more acute form, when we come to the more detailed account of his religious consciousness. The limitations of Jesus' knowledge can have no effect on our attitude towards him as the Revealer of God. Correctness of scientific belief can never be identified with soundness of character. Newton, as has often been pointed out, held weird and foolish notions about the Book of Revelation; but he is not therefore discredited as a man of science. Faraday's private religious views do not discredit him as a scientific authority. Luther once threw an inkpot at the devil, but his power and fame as the Reformer are not thereby diminished. Had Jesus taught explicitly, as an article of salvation, the necessity of a belief in demons, we might rightly question his authority in other directions. But he did not. The important question is not what theory of disease Jesus held, but that the power of God was present with him to heal, and that suffering moved him to compassion.

I need hardly point out the futility of appealing to Jesus as an authority on such questions as the authorship of the 110th Psalm, or the historicity of the Book of Jonah. The appeal is futile, because it is also historical fact that Jesus led the way towards the abrogation of important teachings of the Old Testament when he uttered the words as against tradition: "But I say unto you"; or when he uttered the truly revolutionary principle: "Nothing that entereth into a man, can defile him." There is no indication that he meant us to stop in our criticism where he stopped. Instead, he shows us the way towards complete intellectual freedom in our use of the Scriptures, and the

literary interpretation of them. These questions are to be decided in terms of the best historical research.

There is deep insight in the saying that there is not nearly so much danger of men choosing the wrong authorities, as that, when they have made their choice, they should insist on taking their authorities whole; in other words, treating them as infallible. It is always testing to differ even in scientific or political opinion from a trusted and revered leader, and certain types of mind come to regard such differences as a failure in loyalty. So is it with men's attitude towards Jesus Christ. The Christian religion has suffered from this deep-rooted tendency. Once it was said: prove the Bible wrong on one point and its authority falls; similarly, there is the tendency to say: If Jesus held what we now know to be erroneous scientific views, can we believe that he is our supreme Divine authority, or that he was divine at all? Even in moral matters, it is difficult for some to ascribe supreme moral authority to Jesus, when they must recognise for example, that his words about Divorce[1] are not of universal application. This whole attitude is a misunderstanding of the nature of his authority. Jesus was himself the living embodiment of his own teaching; when his spoken words make unquestioning and literal obedience impossible, we have a right to appeal from the words to the example and spirit of Jesus himself; so does that mind take possession of us that was also in him. We realise the authority of Jesus and he has his perfect work in us only when, as life presents its ethical problems to us, through him we are brought into living touch with the Father's mind and purpose, and we are made aware of the Father's will for the actual situation in which we are involved: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may be able to discern what is the will of God, the good, the acceptable, and the perfect."[2]

[1] Or money, or non-resistance, pp. 204 ff. [2] Rom. xii. 2.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY OF JESUS

We now come to the real centre of our problem, the Self-consciousness of Jesus and its unique and final value for ourselves. For our purpose, we must set aside all theories of the Incarnation, and ponder the facts as we have them in the Gospel records. Nor can we afford to ignore the testimony of the Epistles, which contain the thought of the Church in the earliest days regarding Jesus Christ, and describe the place which he occupied in the hearts of the earliest believers. The place given to Jesus by Paul and by the Church to which he belonged is also historical fact; indeed the earliest historical fact we have. We cannot ignore this testimony, for the reason that, in examining the Gospel records, we must set out to discover a Personality who is, both in his life and death and resurrection, sufficient to account for the fact that he received the name that is above every name, and for the existence of the Christian Church. Can we discover this Personality in the Jesus of the Gospels?

Already, in that demand for attachment to his own person, we are made aware that the self-consciousness of Jesus must take a supreme place in our consideration of his authority. From the story in the Gospels, we become aware with a certainty which no criticism can touch, that it was through the impression, not only of his words and works but through contact with himself, and finally by their experience of his death and resurrection, that the disciples were lifted into communion with God the Father. Even although for obvious

reasons into which there is no need to enter, we confine ourselves to the first three Gospels, it is plain that Jesus' own, mostly quietly assumed sense of unique unbroken relationship to God, affected his followers most deeply and decisively. The great confession of Simon Peter gave to Jesus a place in men's hearts that no one before him, or since, has ever occupied or sought to occupy.

Theologically inadequate as Peter's utterance was—it did not go further in form than a confession of his Messiahship—; morally inadequate, as the subsequent refusal to accept the idea of the Cross and the rebuke of Jesus show, that confession yet gave Christ the highest place, in terms of the only language these men yet knew. In the heart of Jesus himself, Peter's words found a magnificent welcome; these men had at last discovered the significance of what he already knew about himself. When they thus hailed him as Messiah, they had recognised him as the agent and fulfilment of the supreme agelong purpose of God; had submitted themselves to his own estimate of himself; had come thereby into an eternal relationship with God; and, however far their practice still lagged behind their faith, had made him the supreme object of their love and obedience. Dr Rendell Harris[1] has described Jesus' attitude towards his disciples, even at the end, as that of a general reviewing his ragged regiment, "twelve runaways and one traitor." "None but he could have discerned," he says, "in eleven of their knapsacks a marshal's baton." The "marshal's baton" was the faith in God which was kindled in their hearts through himself. It stood for the power of a world-wide authority: "I appoint unto you a kingdom."

The unique God-consciousness of Jesus, his sense of a unique, filial relationship to God, is the dominant feature of his personality. The Johannine Gospel does not, I think, essentially transcend the Synoptics in the loftiness of its conception of the consciousness of Jesus.

[1] *As Pants the Heart*, p. 25.

The emphasis and range of the filial consciousness of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel are greater, and the theme is more fully developed in the reflection of the Evangelist; but the essential content of that filial consciousness is the same. It must also be remembered that the subordination of Jesus to the Father is nowhere more strongly expressed than in this "theological" Gospel: "The Father is greater than I."

1. *The "Sinlessness" of Jesus*

Every one must feel that sinlessness is an unfortunate word, but I fear it must still serve. It may simply suggest a certain softness, as of one who did no harm. It also suggests that we are setting out to prove a negative, always an inconclusive proof. The sinlessness of Jesus stands for a righteousness which is not just the avoidance of error, but a passionate desire for goodness and a unique love towards God and man. The sinlessness of Jesus appears in some moments of his life—at the Last Supper when he speaks of the remission of sins, or at other times as he speaks of forgiveness—, moments when an ordinary human consciousness would be moved to personal penitence and by a sense of personal frailty. Of these there is no trace in Jesus. His sinlessness is just the continuous confidence in his heart that never for a moment is he separated from communion with God. If, however, that sinlessness is to have authority with the sinful hearts of men, it must appear as an achievement, not as an initial and miraculously conferred endowment. It is indeed a *mirabile;* Jesus won his way through life, tempted in all points like as we are, yet not so as to sin. Because that sinlessness is a moral and spiritual achievement, the fruit of a unique filial consciousness maintained by faith and prayer, we shrink from the thought that he reflected upon it at any time. His "sinlessness" never appears as consciously separating him from men. Men

themselves were often deeply conscious of their separation from him and of the extent to which their thoughts were not his thoughts: "thou thinkest not as God thinks," he said once to Peter. Yet his consciousness of being without sin appears only as filial love to God, unbroken and undimmed, and as an inexhaustible and unwearied love to men in whom that filial love and trust were lacking.

The unique God-consciousness of Jesus shines through everywhere in his words and deeds. The words "Abba, Father" are preserved both in Aramaic and in Greek; his disciples showed extraordinary instinctive care to preserve his actual native word, Abba, as though it marked the most characteristic utterance of his lips, and the dominating impression of his life. All his parables are just pictures of the ways of God with men and Nature. His sureness of God is never more strikingly displayed than when he imaginatively pictures the way in which we think God deals with us. It is done not without humour—a sign of triumphant certainty in such a context. The parable of the Surly Neighbour is merely a reproduction of men's thought of God in certain experiences, and under the influence of traditional teaching. In the place of such an idol he puts the image of the living God. There is other and better material in the constitution of our human experience for a conception of God. Men may see God in parental love, the shepherd's care, the merchant's sense of values.

Jesus is conscious that his own life, words, and works, as he is also conscious that his death, is the representation to men of the Father. He regards the truth of God's Fatherhood as the ultimate reality and the interpretation of all being. It was also part of the tragedy of his life that he seems at first to have expected all men to whom he spoke and with whom he lived, to know God intuitively and spontaneously as he himself knew Him. Does he not often speak as though he

would seek to arouse in men a forgotten sense of God the Father and to persuade them that they had misconceived Him, as in the parables of the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son? As though it were true that,

> Trailing clouds of glory do we come,
> From God who is our home.

The sense of failure to convey the thought of the Kingdom as a sovereignty to be accepted with gladness, surprised him. The parable of the Sower is the story of his own failure. It is remarkable that he should thus expect to share his own God-consciousness with men—a lineament of his thought which we are apt to overlook. These lofty words: "No man knoweth the Father but the Son," are not merely a claim. They mark a sense of lonely uniqueness; utter both a cry of distress and also a gracious invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour." It is his own rest, his own joy, his own knowledge that he offers to men. His spiritual loneliness is not as the loneliness of an island in the great ocean; it is the loneliness of a mountain-peak, left there because it alone has withstood the weathering that has made the valleys.

The authority of Jesus' sinlessness must rest on the clear recognition that no other avenue of the knowledge of God was open to the human experience of Jesus than is available for other men. He had no other channels of moral and spiritual strength than we possess. His was a truly human experience. When he prayed, he prayed, seeking an answer as we seek; when he was tempted, he had no magical endowment of moral and spiritual strength on which he might fall back; he was not exempted from the fearful sense that it was possible for him to do the wrong thing. Any other position seems to me to reduce the tears, the temptations, the prayers of Jesus to theatrical unreality.

If you say, "Is he then just like us?" I would reply "Like which of us?" We must refuse to be in-

timidated by the suggestion that Jesus' consciousness differed from ours only in degree and not in kind. The suggestion is itself misleading. All men differ from one another not only in degree, but in kind. Who is able to say when degrees of civilisation and culture pass into an entirely new kind of humanity? You cannot say that all men, because they are distinguished from animals by self-consciousness and a peculiar kind of awareness, are the same in kind. Individuality always means a difference both in degree and in kind. Our faith is that in Jesus Christ we have the most perfect human consciousness, manifesting within itself the most perfect and unbroken sense of relationship to God the Father. In him we have the transcendent, unified Individual.

The uniqueness of Jesus' filial relationship to God is conveyed to our hearts and minds, not by way of cold dispassionate proof, but with an authority to which his loneliness and his love for men give penetrating and compelling power. It comes as a "truth carried alive into the heart by passion." The authority of Jesus as the Way to God, the Truth about God, and the Life that comes from God, is not laid upon us as by an externally forceful and compelling hand. It appears as the sunrise appears, and we spring forth to meet it. It is not based on any historical series of events, or accredited sayings, but it is the commanding appeal of one supreme believing Personality to others. Jesus is the object of our faith, but he is also the supreme creator and succourer of our faith.

Furthermore, to speak of the sinlessness of Jesus, is to imply that there is a moral transcendence in his Personality, an element of "otherness," which awakens within us a predominating sense of awe in our love and loyalty. Perhaps the negative idea contained in the word "sinless," is really useful, as emphasising this element of "otherness" in Jesus; just as "infinite" does, when applied to God. Only the sinful man

can envisage the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. The experience of sin is always deepened when we realise the appeal of his character and words, however true it is also that a sense of sinfulness, mostly inarticulate, makes us seek him. But when we do actually stand in his presence, we stand not as judges but as suppliants. We dare not, nor should we naturally desire to demand that he have an experience of every possible human temptation. He is "wholly other" than we, in the totality of his sinless achievement. Perfect Saviourhood does not entail an actual experience of every human struggle, temptation, and weakness. There are elements of temptation and weakness in our human life, which are a mark not alone of our frailty, but of our sin. He to whose nature some kinds of temptation are foreign, can, if he has imaginative love, do most for us in our weakness. The writer to the Hebrews, in that most remarkable passage, where he describes the human weakness of Jesus, yet uses the comparatively rare word *συμπαθέω*, which implies a condition of weakness into which Jesus lovingly enters, but does not himself experience.[1] There are moments in the Gospel story where Jesus is surprised at the weakness, folly, and blindness of his disciples, as states of mind he knew not in his own experience. Love, even between human personalities, is much more than friendship or comradeship. Friendship demands a certain equality and similarity of interest and character between friends. Love lives on opposites and dissimilarities; it lives on that in another which is most unlike ourselves. Jesus Christ does speak to us out of a unique experience of God and of human life; he does seem to come to us from another world, "down from heaven"; we do continually need him as Mediator, if we are to be sure of God. It is this sense of "otherness" in Jesus Christ, "wholly-otherness" if you like; this distinction of "My Father and your Father" that underlies the

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

doctrines of the Pre-existent Christ or the Birth of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the faith of the Church.

2. *The "Unself-consciousness" of Jesus*

We have been speaking of the unique God-consciousness of Jesus. There is also another aspect of the consciousness of Jesus in his relation to God which must not be passed over; it is itself an important element in the supreme authority he exercises upon men in his revelation of God's nature, character, and purpose; it has already emerged in our thought of Jesus' sinlessness. I have no better name to give it than to call it the "unself-consciousness" of Jesus. I mean that there is an unanalysed element even in the mind of Jesus, in his thought of and relationship towards God, which clearly emerges in a remarkable way in certain of his utterances and attitudes. It underlies the great saying: "No man knoweth the Father but the Son"; it appears in the agonised surprise that others did not share his experience of God; appears in his action at his Baptism, to which he submitted in obedience to a spontaneous loving accountability for the sins of men, and a longing to identify himself with their needs and weakness.[1] This "unself-consciousness" appears also in the words: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, even God." There emerges in these words the humble mind of the Saviour of men, conscious

[1] To raise the question of Jesus' sinlessness in connexion with his Baptism "for the remission of sins," as Mr Middleton Murry does, is to be irrelevant. We cannot contemplate Jesus as at any time reflecting on his own personal holiness; especially at the moment when he identified himself with men and entered upon his mission. If these waiting years in Nazareth contain the hidden story of a real and growing experience of God, and of a deepening desire to know the will of God for himself, there must have been at the Baptism a sense of unresolved discord changed into a harmony. "Thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee." Probably this is all that Mr Middleton Murry means (*The Life of Jesus*, pp. 30 ff.).

and uniquely conscious that all his power and his love are from God. Had he been one who demanded worship of men on earth, he would not be receiving our worship and adoration now. Prayer was the secret of Jesus' own work and life and of his healing powers, not any metaphysical sense of his "divinity."

Through lack of the recognition of this unanalysed element in the God-consciousness of Jesus, his utterances about the Forgiveness of sin have been isolated and emphasised in an unjustifiable way. It is common in arguments for the Person of Jesus, based on the Gospel record, to interpret, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," as Jesus' direct assumption of a divine prerogative. As a matter of fact, if we look closely at, say the story of the paralytic man,[1] we shall see that Jesus is really opposing the kind of official religionist, who would regard forgiveness as a prerogative—ugly word—which a God, weighing as in scales the lives of men, would exercise on the ground of human merit. To Jesus, the forgiveness of God was a crystal-clear deduction from his Fatherhood, as the parable of the Prodigal Son shows. He himself had power on earth to declare it. The man suffered from the inhibition that the physical consequences of his sin were to be his chains for ever, and the healing is the sign of the new revelation of the Father's heart towards him. Jesus did not regard himself as making the forgiveness of God possible, but credible. The cost of forgiveness, of consorting with sinful men, and of ministering the forgiveness of God to them, even unto death, he knew; but it was not for him to magnify that cost, or even to reflect upon it as a source of authority.

I might further illustrate this point, by referring to the absence or almost complete absence of references to the Spirit on Jesus' lips, in the Synoptic Gospels. The teaching on the Spirit is peculiarly Johannine, and has its roots in the Pauline doctrine; in the desire to

[1] Mark ii. 1 ff. and parallels.

combine, as Paul for ethical reasons is ever doing, the idea of the Risen and Living Christ with the Pentecostal Spirit : " The Lord is the Spirit." But there is little evidence that the Jesus of history said much, if anything to his disciples about the Spirit. The story of the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at the Baptism in the Synoptic Gospels owes much to subsequent interpretation, as also of the leading of the Spirit into the Mount of Temptation. Jesus' silence on the Spirit only deepens our sense of the immediacy of his communion with God, and it is a silence that increases his religious authority. The abiding presence of God in his soul, the unanalysed simplicity of his communion with the Father, lifted him, as Dr E. F. Scott says, above the consideration of " ways and means." The disciples after the Resurrection discovered and interpreted that in him, of which he was not himself fully conscious. The glory of Christianity is, as Dr T. R. Glover says, that " we are still exploring God on the lines of Jesus Christ—re-thinking God all the time, finding Him out. That is what Jesus meant us to do."[1] Herein lies supreme religious authority. The most compelling authority is that which freely, naturally, and inevitably invites investigation, and says, " Come and see."

[1] *The Jesus of History*, p. 72.

CHAPTER V

JESUS AND APOCALYPTIC THOUGHT

I HAVE left myself little space to consider a matter of great apologetic importance to-day, which may seem deeply to affect the religious authority of Jesus. It has emerged already in our consideration of him as a teacher, where it was said that in scientific matters he is a man of his own time. So was he also in the forms in which his religious thought expressed itself.

It is impossible in a few sentences to deal adequately with Jewish Apocalyptic ideas as they emerge in the teaching of Jesus. It may be taken as an assured result of criticism, that the earlier attempts of scholars to regard the Apocalyptic and Eschatology in the words of Jesus as due entirely to misrepresentation on the part of his narrators, or to a mingling of prophecies of Jesus regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, with current apocalyptic ideas, have broken down. Most certainly Jesus' sayings about the End of the Age and the Coming of the Son of Man in his glory, have passed through the minds of interpreters, whose thought was moulded by the Jewish conception—based on the teaching of the prophets and developed in the later apocalyptic—of the chosen remnant of the nation which awaited the imminent coming of God to deliver His people. We cannot account for the Christian idea of the imminent Parousia of Jesus by saying that the early Church had simply transferred to itself the hopes cherished by the remnant, and had come to see in the risen Jesus the Messiah of God. It is impossible to believe that the expectation of the speedy return of Jesus would have

taken the place it did in the thought of the early Church and of Paul, unless it had firm foundation in the teaching of Jesus himself. We may at least take it that Jesus of Nazareth did not regard the Kingdom as a social condition of things, slowly and gradually coming. He thought of it as a time near at hand, when God would manifest Himself suddenly and soon (although times and seasons are known only to God), destroy all hostile powers, and assert His sole sovereignty. He himself would be the Central Figure. The references to the Kingdom as a mustard-seed growing into a tree, and as leaven, cannot be interpreted as suggesting, that the idea of a slowly progressive coming of the Kingdom, in our sense, was in the mind of Jesus. Neither of the processes mentioned are long enough to enable them to bear the weight of such an analogy; they are the smallness and hiddenness of the natural processes that are the significant element in the illustrations. The parables of growth mean that men are as yet unaware of the tremendous significance of his own presence and influence among them. The best commentary on these parables are the words of Jesus himself: "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear! I tell you truly, many prophets and good men have longed to see what you see, but they have not seen it; and to hear what you hear, but they have not heard it."[1]

Apocalyptic thought was really a development of prophecy and reached its climax in the period between the Testaments. It was the product of despair, as the nation was trampled under one pagan power after another. A note of deep pessimism underlay the movement. The doctrine of the two ages emerges. The present age is given over by God wholly to the power of evil; but the time is at hand when a new age will dawn suddenly, and God will interfere in order to vindicate His chosen nation. The history of religion

[1] Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

has nothing more magnificent than this faith which took its rise in the soul of a nation from whose history all outward signs of God's care and solicitude had passed. The story of religion can also show nothing quite so insular and degraded and vindictive as the ungodly mood which the apocalyptic hope produced in the masses of the people. Political ideas were intermingled; hatred towards Gentiles was fostered; pictures of the Last Judgment were gloated upon, in which the enemies of God's own people writhed in judgment beneath His feet. And yet there were always a small company of the quiet in the land, to which Jesus' own family belonged, who kept pure the great hope in their hearts; waited for the consolation of Israel; and knew that salvation was of the Lord, however they conceived the form in which the Lord's salvation would come.

Is it disconcerting to believe, as I think we must, that Jesus shared these apocalyptic hopes in their noblest form?

There are three leading forms in which the course of history has been conceived in the thought of men. There is the Greek idea of cycles, an ending followed by a continual beginning; the catastrophic idea of Judaism, the Kingdom of God; and the modern idea of progress, slow but sure. The true view of history is a combination of the two latter, and for this combination we owe everything to the creative thought of Jesus. He himself moved in the atmosphere of apocalyptic thought, however much his words may owe to subsequent interpretation. He did expect a sudden manifestation of God's power, following on his crucifixion. But when and how was in the Father's hand. It cannot have been otherwise. The main forms of apocalyptic thought taught that a heavenly figure called Messiah, would appear in the centre of the picture, the vicegerent of God. Jesus believed that he was that Messiah, the fulfilment in his own person of all the hopes, longings, and faith of his people.

Herein lies the greatness of Jesus. He accepts the form of religious thought of his own day, but he never allows it to master him. In his use of it he transforms it. Just as in selecting from different portions of the Old Testament law these two principles of love to God and love to one's neighbour, he brought into being and incarnated in himself a spirit that would ultimately abrogate the letter; so in his use of apocalyptic he was the pioneer of a faith which ultimately transformed it into the Christian message, especially as presented in the Johannine doctrine of the Spirit. The transformation which Jesus effected even in the apocalyptic of his own day, is seen in the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; therein Jesus sharply distinguishes his teaching from current apocalyptic. The typical Israelite looked for the Kingdom because he was proud in spirit, and presumed on being a Son of Abraham with a right to share in the Kingdom. "Poor in spirit," means just to be "poor" in spiritual need, and to know it; the average Pharisee was poor, and did not know it.[1] The Kingdom Jesus looked for was a Kingdom of God, where all nations would be gathered together; his disciple band, in their poverty of spirit, were to be the nucleus of those who were able to receive the Kingdom.

The final religious authority of Jesus would be seriously compromised, if it could be proved that he simply absorbed even the finest apocalyptic thought of his time. That is not so. The authority of Jesus is felt at its greatest in his apocalyptic teaching. Why? He leaves the current apocalyptic pregnant with the power of his own personality, a power that would ultimately transform it into a universal gospel. The chief directions in which his creative personality is manifest may be thus briefly summarised.

[1] Cf. the illuminating discussion in Dr John Dow's, *Jesus and the Human Conflict*, pp. 109 ff.

1. He utterly discarded the pessimistic outlook upon the present age, a feature of contemporary apocalyptic thought, which held that the world at the moment was wholly given over to the power of evil, the "Prince of this world." Jesus taught that God is reigning now. He is making His sun to shine on the evil and the good. "Your heavenly Father knoweth." God is very near even to an outcast in the "far country." "I will arise and go to my father." "The hairs of your head are all numbered." "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father."

2. He laid stress, not on the changes that would come about in outward conditions, but on changes in inward disposition. Repentance will consist in changes of heart, not merely, as the Baptist taught, in changes of behaviour. "Love your enemies." "Do not seek after money." "Do not be called Rabbi." "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

3. The most profound change he made was in the conception of himself as Messiah. It was a new thing to make of Isaiah liii. a Messianic prophecy. The new Messiah was to be distinguished by selfless, suffering love. He would conquer sin not even by the rod of his mouth, but by submitting himself to its power. There is a moral supremacy and solitary greatness in a Personality who, casting aside the venerable traditional teaching of the past, antagonising often the noblest of the ideas that saturated the religious *Zeitgeist* of his own day, at the cost of his own life, changed the sword of the expected Messiah into a Cross.

Has the apocalyptic idea, as employed by Jesus, nothing authoritative to say to us moderns? Has the truth that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah no meaning for us to-day? There was no other idea by which he could have conveyed intelligibly to the

people of his own time and to the minds of his disciples, that in him all the hopes of the nation and the world were fulfilled, all their fears set at rest, and all their iniquity pardoned. The apocalyptic idea, as the outward form of expression employed by Jesus in order to make plain to men his own self-consciousness, has much to say to us to-day, if we seek in him not legal authority but an authority of the spirit. Does not the apocalyptic idea, and especially the idea of the Messiah, teach that the government of the world is not capricious, or rigidly determined, like the uncoiling of a rope? Is it not, again, a bulwark against a purely mechanistic idea of the universe? Does it not mean that all history is permeated by the working of the Divine Spirit? Does it not suggest that in the personality of Jesus Christ, is contained the secret, the now open mystery of God's purpose for men, and that through him we have the final revelation of God? Paul reaches his conception of Christ in the Universe through the channel of apocalyptic ideas. The Johannine writer, discarding the apocalyptic form, firmly established the idea of the cosmic Christ in the experience of the Church: "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." Does our world to-day not need a renewed infection of the Messianic idea, where so many trust that the world is getting better somehow; that progress is inevitably always upward and onward; and that our hope is in scientific knowledge? We may discard the term "Messiah," but we must retain its content. He who so transformed the Messianic idea is the hope of the world. Ultimately the authority of Jesus rests on the truth of his Incarnation, that the God whom he revealed is inextricably and inseparably identified with our flesh, our human life; that to ignore Him is not to live but to die. The apocalyptic of Jesus recalls us also to the great truth that religion and morality are one; that all forms of social service are in the end

useless, unless we believe that salvation is of the Lord. The flooding of our hearts with the overwhelming sense of the Love and Power of God in Jesus Christ has behind it a tide that is strong enough to cleanse the world, if we open the gates of our own faith and love.

CHAPTER VI

THE FINALITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Our discussion of the Authority of Jesus would not be complete without some reference to the claim that Jesus Christ is our *final* and absolute religious and moral authority. There are two points of view from which objection may be urged to the finality of our Christian faith.

I. It may seem as though this claim were in contradiction with everything we know of the evolutionary process as applied to the interpretation of all religious experience. Is it consistent with our acceptance of the evolutionary idea in religion, that the climax of human religious attainment was reached in the life of a Jewish peasant, two thousand years ago ?

II. The other objection may be thus stated. If the coming of Jesus Christ is believed to be the entrance into time of God Himself, can that revelation of God's nature and purpose regarded, as undoubtedly it must be, as a historical event in time, itself be other than temporal ? Just on account of the historical basis of Christianity, and because the facts are related by men whose minds were conditioned and limited by contemporary historical circumstance, are we not compelled to believe that, one day, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ may be superseded by an even clearer and nobler revelation ?

Before I proceed to deal with these objections, let me say that I prefer to deal with this claim as a claim for the finality of Jesus Christ, rather than as a claim

for the finality of the Christian religion. I am aware that the two claims are essentially one; but it is easier, I think, to defend the claim from the former point of view than from the latter. We are not yet sufficiently agreed as to what the essence of Christianity is. There are many who cannot separate the finality of Jesus Christ from the finality of a dogmatic interpretation of his person. There are many who still believe that the essence of Christianity was defined once for all by the Councils of the opening centuries; that God rested from his labours of revelation in Jesus Christ, say at Nicea; and that afterwards He confined Himself to vitalising the institution and stabilising or reinterpreting the dogma. We must remember, on the other hand, those who have real difficulty, for example, with the traditional conception of Jesus Christ as a pre-existent heavenly Being who "for us men and our salvation came down from heaven"; also with the assumption that the Christian Gospel, committed to the charge of the Church, would lose an essential part of its content, if departure were made from such a form of thought. The traditional doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ is after all a deduction from what the Church has found him to be in its own experience.

I have said that it is easier to defend the claim of finality for the Christian religion as a claim for the finality of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that a claim of finality for Christianity cannot be substantiated. It does mean that until we realise the power of the Creative Spirit set free by Jesus Christ, we cannot understand what is meant by finality. We claim no finality for Christian doctrine, though we may claim that it is true. The body of a doctrine may be laid in the ground, but its truth will arise, clothed in a more glorious body. A sense of the truth of our religion means that the spirit of it is creative. A creative spirit must have material with which to work; Christianity had material of its own, and has also

borrowed in its history from alien cultures and other religions. "By means of all that it borrowed, it was seeking to embody in more adequate forms what was truly its own."[1] This very power of assimilation is a sign of the absolute nature of Christianity. Its refusal to be mastered by borrowed material, and its instinctive rejection of borrowed material at certain crises in its history, are others. In these signs we have tokens of the presence of the very Spirit of Jesus Christ.

I

We may now proceed to consider the first form of objection urged against the Finality of Jesus Christ; namely that, if he is for all time the perfection of human character and the final revelation of the mind of God, did he not, in the light of evolutionary progress, arrive too soon? Is he not more reasonably to be placed in the honourable succession of the spiritual aristocrats? The lines of an answer may be laid down as follows, in two directions.

1. The question of the finality of Jesus, obviously, is of interest only to the man who believes in the personality of God. We are not so deeply concerned to justify the ways of evolution, as to justify the ways of God. Yet after all, evolution, so far as we know its ways, does not consistently proceed by reserving its noblest creations for the end of a process. It may begin with the emergence of a type, such as man, who towers above the other creatures because he has the capacity to name them and can actually himself determine the course of future development. Uncertainty as to the character of God and His purpose, has always been the greatest barrier to social and religious progress. It is quite reasonable to suppose that man's deepest need, in view of further progress,

[1] E. F. Scott, *The Gospel and its Tributaries*, p. 290.

once a really deep religious experience had been developed as in Judaism, was certainty as to the character of God. As we have already seen, Judaism presents the unique phenomenon in religious history, of a record of continuous religious development.[1] In the Judaism of the first century A.D. also, we have the supreme example in history of uncertainty as to the nature and purpose of God, an uncertainty in the heart of the noblest of all the religions. The very legalism and traditionalism of religion in Our Lord's day was a sign of this uncertainty, as legalism and traditionalism always are. Official Judaism had lost the immediate assurance of the prophetic experience. The uncertainty became supremely acute in the experience of a Paul. It is his note of certainty regarding God which marks the influence upon him of the message and person of Jesus; who came, "in the fulness of time," when the sense of uncertainty as to God was at its height not only in Judaism but in the world religions; who stood at the head of a new spiritual race of men who had become certain about God and derived their certainty from and through Jesus. Paul's interpretation of the Christian Gospel is the truth. The existence of a Heavenly Father Who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and the possibility of communion with Him, form together the essential content of the preaching of Jesus, as of his life and death and resurrection. The certainty and authority of this Gospel are only increased by the conviction that God Himself took the first step in reconciling the world to Himself through Jesus Christ. This faith itself is the gift of God. Can any future Gospel be conceived which would bring men nearer to God than this?

In view of this uncertainty, Jesus' life and teaching may be said to represent the master-simplification of all religion. To talk merely of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the doing of His will as a

[1] Pp. 182 f., *supra*.

simplification, would be a confusion of thought. The will of the Father would still remain vague and indeterminate, because "father" is a name that varies in its content with men's experience of fatherhood. To say, on the other hand, that the will of God the Father has once in human life been perfectly done, and that God was incarnate in the human personality of Jesus Christ, is *the* master-simplification. It means that God is like Jesus Christ. Here, in the historical Jesus, is the culmination of a line of momentous simplifications of the conception of God which emerge in the experience of the Jewish people, particularly as interpreted and expressed by the prophets. The comparative study of religions has left intact and unique that crowning simplification of the Jewish prophetic faith—the belief in one God, who is righteous and holy. The prophets further simplified God's moral requirements of men, as against the legal intricacies of ecclesiastical morality and worship: "What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The greatest prophet of all discovered the secret of vicarious suffering in the faith that it was redemptive: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." These discoveries mark revolutionary moments in religious history. Like all revolutionary moments, they had, as the symbol of the creative power within them, some momentously simple principle of thought and life. Revolutionary symbols are always simple, like the Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity of the French Revolution. We believe that Jesus Christ is final, because he brought into being the master-simplification of all life and was conscious of so doing. He himself was the simplification. Christianity is the final religion, we claim, just because it is historical: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Jesus Christ is final, inasmuch as he changed the whole course of history, and created a new type of humanity.

He is, in Canon Streeter's words, final, "not in the sense of having arrived at the end of the journey, but in having once for all discovered the right road."[1] This statement does not contain the whole truth, as we shall see; but it fixes the indubitable fact that, for us, his finality is not a matter of logical proof but of faith. We explore life under his guidance, and find in his life and message the God for whom all men are seeking. We start with an experience of God's Fatherhood, not with a metaphysical doctrine.

2. The other direction in which we may seek an answer to the contention that if Jesus Christ is the final revelation of God to men he came too soon in the evolutionary process of history, may be thus described.

Time and the process in time are not applicable to what the personality of Jesus stands for in religious experience. Jesus is final both in the sense that he is the ultimate goal of humanity ("until we all come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"), and in the sense that he is "the man from heaven," the inauguration of a new humanity. Scientists estimate that the earth is 2000 million years old and may last a similar length of time. Man is some 300,000 years old. In other words, Man, born as it were in a house seventy years old, is himself only three days old![2] Our knowledge of our environment must be appallingly incomplete! In the light of such facts, the actual date of Jesus' birth is a religious fact of deepest significance, precisely because it comes so soon. It is true that the world had to wait say 298,000 years since man began to be, for his coming; yet he came when man was just a few seconds less than three days old. We are those few seconds older now. The human race may still have before it a life of 2000 millions of years. Would it not be like God to lavish Himself upon us at the very beginning of man's life on earth? That is

[1] *Adventure*, p. 173.

[2] Cf. J. H. Jeans, *Eos*, p. 13.

how we treat our children; we lavish our care on them in their infancy: "How much more your heavenly Father!" If man is here and now but at the beginning of an eternal life, which cannot be measured in terms of space and time, if the ultimate goal is communion with God, the divine initiative would inevitably take the form of showing us the right road at the very beginning, that we might not wander away from the Love that made us. The Christian Gospel is that God did so, once for all, timelessly, in Jesus Christ: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

II

We have still to answer the central objection to the finality of Jesus Christ. It is urged that inasmuch as he is an historical personality in time, his significance must also be temporal. His coming is, according to our faith, an act of Divine aggression. Is it possible to say that a divine action which took place at one historical point of time, can ever be regarded as final, decisive, and unique? Can we say that whatever enters the field of time may be itself timeless; be independent of and transcend the movement and influence of contemporary history; ultimately detach itself, in our estimate of its moral and religious value, from the contemporary environment and from the influences of the past? Can what is absolute be regarded as *inseparably* connected with an actual historical event? Can it be so regarded by finite minds which are themselves the product of history? Is the conviction of the finality of Jesus the supreme instance of a wrong projection of our own wishes, needs, and desires? Moreover, when we say that God appeared finally and decisively in history, do we not put ourselves at the mercy of the historical critic? Is

all that we know regarding Jesus Christ contained in the accounts given of him in the Gospels ?

The only finality that we have a right or need to claim is that God's nature and His purpose for men have been finally and completely revealed in the coming of Jesus Christ. Christian religious experience would be deprived of the objective validity which is necessarily bound up with its assurance, if in any way it appeared that it had not entered fully into possession of the truth about God, and if that truth were not guaranteed by the action of God Himself. By the truth about God is meant, the complete assurance of God's nature and purpose concerning men ; and His nature and purpose in the world, as interpreted by faith, in terms of that assurance. The truth about God does not mean that God has explained His world and its processes to us. That is the business of science and philosophy. The religious interpretation of the world is ultimately independent, as we have seen, of any scientific or philosophical interpretation ; however much religion may stimulate speculation, whilst also giving complete autonomy to science and philosophy. The finality of Christian religious experience means that we are actually in possession of God ; that we have access into " this grace in which we stand."

All the highest religions are historical religions, and Christianity is pre-eminently so. We are indeed dependent on the historical fact of Jesus Christ. Indifference to the historical record of the life and sayings of Jesus Christ and to the historicity of the apostolic testimony contained in the New Testament, would make of Christianity a mere speculative system. It would be a flower cut off by the roots. Belief in the historical personality of Jesus Christ is the one source and guarantee of the continuance and indestructibility of the Christian faith.

What do we mean by the historical fact of Christ ? It must ever be remembered that our attitude towards

the history of the Christian faith, from its earliest appearance, is a religious attitude; not the attitude of the pure historian who is concerned with dates and speeches and isolated facts. There is such a thing as scientific historical research as applied to the records of our faith which has its undoubted place. No results, however, of scientific research have been able to dim our vision of the commanding significance of the Personality of Jesus in the story of the origins of Christianity; of the unique impact and authority of his teaching; and of the transformations which his spirit and teaching effected in the earliest Christian communities. For religion, the historical fact of Christ is not confined to the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth; it also includes that Personality as the source and origin of an historical process and the source and origin of the experience of historical persons; from Paul and John to Luther and Schleiermacher and the Christian personalities of our own day. For us, the historical Christ is a Personality, who demands that our vision of him should include the vision of a community—a Church in all its branches and ministries, of a moral and social development in history of which he is the source and to which men must still repair, if continued progress is to be assured. We also believe that the Church and all the moral and social developments in society are required in order fully to express the value of the historical person of Jesus for faith. It is an essential constituent of our belief in the finality of Jesus Christ, that the mere fragment of the corporate experience of humanity which is represented by the Christian era, cannot have exhausted the power of Christ.[1] Christ has indeed, as has already been said, shown us the right way; but that must not be interpreted merely in the sense that we are sure of our direction. We are also absolutely sure of our Guide:

[1] Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, *The Originality of the Christian Message*, pp. 177 ff.

"I am the Way." The endless capacity for growth and the inexhaustible power of self-renewal in Christianity, in particular within the Christian Church, are themselves indications of the continued presence of the supreme Guide, and contribute towards the assurance that we are actually in living personal touch with God Himself. In one sense, it may be misleading to make a distinction as we have done, between the finality of the Christian religion and the finality of Jesus Christ; the story of the Christian religion as represented by the Church, is the story of those human personalities whom Christ has redeemed and recreated in his own image; we need the fact of these personalities in order to understand Christ. Indeed, all that we know of Christ has been mediated to us through Christian personalities.

The primary fact remains, however, that all this historical development and its interpretation, are dependent on a supreme historical Figure, in whom we claim to have recognised, once and for all, the nature and purpose of God Himself. Can we conceive this as a possible happening, at one particular moment of time? Our answer depends upon the kind of God whom we see in Jesus Christ. If God is like Jesus, an eternally Good Will, the Father, we may be sure that His is a Will to power, and must by its very nature refuse to remain inactive and invisible. This is not mere reasoning in a circle. We take our stand on the historical fact of the self-consciousness of Jesus Christ, which stands out crystal-clear in the New Testament, from the midst of the interpretations of His followers. "Jesus is above the heads of his reporters." That he never discouraged, but supremely encouraged a complete abandonment of faith towards himself, as he interpreted his own relation to God and men, is a fact, which it is sheer tampering with history to doubt for a moment. Such a God as He with whom Jesus Christ held unbroken communion while on earth, if

He remains true to His own nature, must somehow appear unmistakably in the temporal order of things.

At the same time, the appearance of God in the temporal order, at one particular moment of time, is not the sole basis of Christian faith, and its assurance that it is in actual touch with a God who completely satisfies the heart. Men, indeed, were seeking for God when He came in the fullness of time; but complete religious experience can never lose sight of what men—again at one particular moment of time—did to Him when they found Him. What men did, and how Jesus Christ dealt with their action, is an essential part of the history of the Christian faith. In other words, the final fact of Christ must include his death and resurrection, apart from any theological interpretation which may be put on these. There was a peculiar and unique quality of selflessness in all that Jesus did; that selflessness is at its climax in his submission to the evil which men inflicted upon him. The Cross of Christ is not to be regarded as a sudden dazzling and unexpected height of heroic self-sacrifice in his conduct, as a self-sacrificing death might be in the lives of many men. His submission to death at the hands of wicked men was but the climax and interpretation of his whole action, and was like him all his life. He died in obedience to the same spirit in which he lived. As it has been put, it is not Jesus' death, but Jesus dying, that is the centre of the Christian faith. His death happened at one particular moment of time. Men who spoke a certain language, belonged to a certain kind of civilisation, inhabited an insignificant portion of the earth, belonged to a certain race, yielded to the influence of certain social and political passions arising out of a particular historical situation, were the men who crucified him. Yet the same evil passions that blazed in their hearts, the same blindness, the same motives, are in men's hearts to-day. There was in them a moral alienation of heart, and a selfish preoccupation with their own

interests which still prevails. These motives were the cause that Christ suffered at men's hands. Only as we realise that the selfishness of the first century A.D. is, in its ethical quality and effects, the same as that of the twentieth; that this selfishness fell on him, and that he took it lovingly and in a measure of victorious love which transcended all that the world had yet known of love, and has never been repeated save in the lives of those who bear his name; so do we begin to know that what happened at the Cross of Christ, although it happened in history, is a timeless thing. The magnetic needle of the compass swings unerringly to the North, driven and held there by an electrical energy which fills a whole universe. The needle is itself, on the deck of any vessel facing the winds and currents of the ocean, only a tiny point in space and time; but it tells the mariner finally all that he needs to know for his immediate purpose, about the whole vast scheme of Nature. At one particular time and place on Calvary, we believe that we have beheld the supreme revelation of the heart of God; also of the heart of man, without God in the world. In the particular moment we behold the universal. The Love of God because it is everywhere, can be anywhere, and has gathered up the whole of itself into the crowning act of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is a reasonable faith. Our faith rests in history, and above all, on one moment in history. The prophets experienced God in terms of the history of their own nation. The earliest disciples experienced Him also in the history of a single human Life; very brief, but packed with such fullness of meaning and power and charged with such unwavering intensity of love, that it gathered up and fulfilled the meaning of all history. The Great Tale that embodies this experience was told with no meticulous regard for the minutiæ of narrative, and with no dryasdust concern for complete consistency of external fact. The writers of it are chiefly concerned to kindle

in our hearts the same faith they themselves had; to give us a portrait of Jesus Christ, drawn by individuals and by a community that had known him and still knew him as crucified, yet alive in their hearts for evermore: "I am he that liveth, and was dead."

The ultimate decision regarding the Finality of Jesus Christ must ever rest with our own individual faith. Browning's poem, *The Guardian Angel*, is an impression made on him by a picture, which represents an angel standing beside and covering with his wings, a child who prays. The opening stanzas are as follows:

> Dear and great Angel, would'st thou only leave
> That child, when thou hast done with him, for me?
> Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
> Shall find performed thy special ministry,
> And time come for departure, thou, suspending
> Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
> Another still, to quiet and retrieve.
>
> Then I shall find thee step one step, no more,
> From where thou standest now, to where I gaze—
> And suddenly my head is covered o'er
> With those wings, white above the child who prays
> Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
> Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
> Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

The ultimate ground on which great believers in Jesus Christ and in the finality of his revelation of God rest their faith, be they capable or incapable of sustained thinking, is beautifully symbolised in the poem just quoted, if we substitute in our minds the Tale of Jesus Christ for the picture. The Great Figure, presented to us in the Gospels and Epistles, in the story of prophetic personalities, in the worship and sacraments of the Church, becomes alive. At "one step," He leaves those special recorded ministries of healing, strengthening, forgiving; and fills the sight and answers the prayer of,

> another child for tending,
> another still, to quiet and retrieve.

He comes to guard each one of us " out of all the world," renews in each suppliant heart the assurance of God, and leads us into communion with God. One chief purpose of this book, is to reassure, if reassurance is needed, any who have had this palmary experience. There is an intimacy in the Christian experience of God, made possible for us through Jesus Christ, which does not characterise any other form of religion. It is not the intimacy of familiarity. It always contains that deep sense of One " wholly other " than we, in holiness and in nature ; other also, inasmuch as His mysterious purposes are infinitely vaster in range than the area of our puny lives ; yet for the carrying out of which, we are absolutely required, and to which we are called. It is an intimacy which would be impossible and incredible, save on the invitation of the Spirit which pours into our hearts, evoking the " Abba, Father " of the child of God. The gift of the experience of God in Jesus Christ, is the gift of an experience from which the historical Jesus is never absent. The gift without the Giver is bare.

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GEO. H. DORAN COMPANY
NEW YORK

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE EDINBURGH PRESS, EDINBURGH

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St 81
Strachan, R.H.
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